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HIDDEN  
SPRINGS.



# HIDDEN SPRINGS.



# HIDDEN SPRINGS.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.,

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IN REMEMBRANCE  
OF MUCH HAPPY FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL,  
AND IN TOKEN  
OF INCREASING FRATERNAL ATTACHMENT,  
THIS VOLUME  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW  
LABOURERS  
THE DEACONS  
OF CAVENDISH CHAPEL, MANCHESTER.





# CONTENTS.



## SERMON I.

	PAGE
CONTENTMENT.....	1

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."—PHIL. iv. 11.

## A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS.

PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. I. ....	24
PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. II., 1—11.....	50

## SERMON II.

GREAT PURPOSES AND INTERRUPTIVE VOICES.....	61
---	----

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—MATT. xvi. 21—26.

## SERMON III.

POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE .....	PAGE 80
----------------------------	------------

"Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."—2 PET. i. 15.

## SERMON IV.

USEFULNESS .....	98
------------------	----

"And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away."—MATT. xxi. 19.

## SERMON V.

SPIRITS IN PRISON .....	115
-------------------------	-----

"By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."—1 PET. iii. 19.

"For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead."—1 PET. iv. 6.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things . . . under the earth."—PHIL. ii. 10.

## SERMON VI.

A TROUBLED LIFE.....	140
----------------------	-----

AN INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS XXXVII. 18—34.

## SERMON VII.

GLORYING .....	153
----------------	-----

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in His wisdom: . . . but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."—JER. ix. 23, 24.

## SERMON VIII.

SECRET THINGS .....	172
---------------------	-----

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."—DEUT. xxix. 29.

## SERMON IX.

LETTER TO EPHESUS .....	PAGE 187
-------------------------	-------------

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."—REV. ii. 1—7.

## SERMON X.

THE TWO MINISTRATIONS .....	203
-----------------------------	-----

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."—2 COR. iii. 9.

## SERMON XI.

LETTER TO SMYRNA.....	223
-----------------------	-----

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—REV. ii. 8—10.

## CONTENTS.

### SERMON XII.

THE CONVICTED WOMAN .....	PAGE 243
---------------------------	-------------

“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, *as though He heard them not*. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”—JOHN viii. 3—11.

### SERMON XIII.

THE THEOLOGY OF MONEY .....	254
-----------------------------	-----

“Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.”—DEUT. viii. 18.

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.”—1 COR. xvi. 2.

OUTLINES AND HINTS .....	266—360
--------------------------	---------

TELEGRAMS .....	361—375
-----------------	---------

PRAYERS .....	376—387
---------------	---------

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# HIDDEN SPRINGS.

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## CONTENTMENT.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."—PHIL. iv. 11.

THROUGHOUT this epistle to the Philippians, there is a heightening tone of filial thankfulness and saintly triumph. Its first word is one of thankfulness, its last of benediction. The Apostle gladly announces that the most contrary events have "fallen out unto the furtherance of the gospel,"—his very bonds had caused many of the brethren to "wax confident." He says, "I joy and rejoice with you all;" he calls the church his "joy and crown;" and in a moment of high exultation and overbrimming gladness, he exclaims, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Once again he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." Joy is the key-note of this melodious letter. Why should this be accounted a remarkable circumstance? Might not joy sing in an apostle's heart, as well as in the heart of garlanded conquerors and throned kings? The remarkable fact is this, that the man who thus rejoices, and summons



other persons to kindred gladness, is a *prisoner*! In his external condition there is nothing calling for joy of heart. The criminal's chain is on the author's hand, and even on that symbol of degradation he has no curse to pronounce. So happy a man never was bound to the throne of Nero. The chain binds him rather to the cross of Jesus than to the dungeon of the emperor. You expected the moan of angry discontent from the wronged bondsman, and lo, a happy song is on his lip! You expected to see a man bowed down with grief, and lo, a plumed head is lifted up in the sunshine! You thought his letter would have been deep-bordered with the blackness of mourning, and behold, it is fringed as with refined silver!

This problem must be solved. The man is mad, or the discontented world is mad. The secret must be examined and pronounced upon. When men are borne up in such ecstatic experiences, when their strong, free wing nears the sun, they necessarily express themselves in language dimly intelligible to men who are grovelling in the dust. Their glowing words are deemed poetic rather than practical; they are lethargically pronounced rhapsodical and extravagant; there is an unearthliness in their victor-tones; and men who never climbed a tree wonder how others can scale the stars.

What a banner is this that the Apostle floats from his Roman prison! Did ever human madness conceive so strange a device as that which it bears?

While men are on every hand complaining and repining, one voice is lifted up higher than all others, and its sweet word is—"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." There is an air of impossibility about the utterance. The speaker is in such a marked minority that we would gladly, in self-defence, charge him with insanity. We feel this all the more that the voice comes from the prison and not from the palace. It is not the imperial voice of Cæsar, but the voice of Cæsar's prisoner. The Festus-world is indignant, and cannot withhold the exclamation, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Yes; "beside thyself:" the world is in deep debt to its madmen. These madmen keep the chariot-wheel in motion. They climb heights, and fathom depths, which strike terror into the coward-heart of their contemporaries. A man cannot attain any sublime moral experience without incurring the charge of madness. Christ was plainly told that He had a devil; and the men who told Him this would not scruple to call Jehovah Beelzebub. It is difficult to interpret men who are upon a higher plane than ourselves; and, failing to interpret them, it is easy to roar up into the higher spheres a vague charge of madness. The madness of one age is the sobriety of the next. We must allow for a little foam: when the sea has lost its foam it may still be majestic, but I shall deem that its pulse has ceased and its eternal hymn been hushed in death.

"I have *learned*." Special emphasis and fervour must be thrown into this word "learned," for it is one of the key-words of the passage; it is a multitudinous word. It speaks of a school, and of education, of drilling and many-sided discipline. The whole utterance is that of a man who has been undergoing a process; who has been immured in a library, and who, having patiently read page after page, and undergone a severe and exhaustive examination, pronounces himself "learned." If we stumble at the word "learned" we shall stumble all through the exposition. A man cannot come to this moral eminence by intuition: it is not to be attained in a moment of high inspiration of genius; nothing but the ripping plough, dragged by a fire-breathing team, and the pulverizing harrow, and the crushing roller: nothing but a discipline that grinds the bones, and racks the heart, and strains the very last suggestion out of the over-goaded brain: nothing but the hardships of earth, sanctified by the Spirit of heaven, can make the "learned" man of the text. Not books, but heavy burdens, —not gifts of the intellect, but griefs of the heart, —not paid schoolmasters, but invisible, despotic, inexorable tutors, can carry us through the education which ends in this lofty refinement of learning.

The Apostle's autobiography is at hand, and that will tell us somewhat of the educational course through which he passed:—

"In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings: . . . by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceiver, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

What think you of *that*? A man striking and swiftly recoiling,—hardly in one condition until he is thrown into another; just rising into honour, and suddenly plunged into dishonour; on the point of imagining himself well known, and in a moment the world shuddering with horror at the mention of his name! This rapidly alternating experience gives a man profound lore. It is not the gradual transition by which day darkens into night, and night brightens into day. If an analogy can be found in the firmament, it must be when storms are raging there, and light breaking through the gloomy masses: now is there a wing of deep blue, and anon the clouds shut it out from the eye of the admiring earth: this moment there is a fringe of beauty on the dark storm-cloud; and the next, thunder roars as if cursing the intrusion. We must not only have variety, but also suddenness and violence of alternation. Our bread must be snatched out of our hand at the very moment that our hunger pines for it, and the water dashed from our grasp when the fire is scorching our tongue. A discipline of

this kind will teach us much of inconstancy and mutation ; much of the fickleness of circumstance ; much of the rottenness of man.

Another page of the Apostle's autobiography contains this :—

“ Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool.) I am more ; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods ; once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

No wonder that the Apostle, having passed through this rugged university, should emerge a man of profound and varied learning. He has seen life on every side. *Books* can do comparatively little in the education of the whole breadth of our manhood. They are useful up to a given point. They cannot be dispensed with in any course of liberal education. The world must always have its library. Authorship is a profession that never can decline. The pen shall flourish when the rust of ages has eaten up the barbarous sword. While this is happily true, it must be borne in mind that books can never give the learning which the Apostle here claims for himself. Stoning, and ship-

wreck, and scourging, and misrepresentation, and desertion ; hunger, and thirst, and nakedness ; fire, and pestilence, and sword ; *these* must be the fierce teachers, and savage drill-sergeants, to whose discipline the heart must submit. He is but a learned fool who has read nothing but books. Such a reader can never pronounce with authority on any of the deeper problems of human life.

I rejoice that the Apostle has written this catalogue of his sufferings. Do you ask me why ? Because it does the breaking heart good to hear the sob of another's greater woe ! The Bible could not have been God's book had it been unmarked by the traces of manifold grief. I could not have read a Bible all sunshine. We need more than summer in any book that is to meet all the features and experiences of this apostate life. God has graciously permitted His servants to put on record the story of their struggles in the service of Jesus. Not only so ; He has done more ; He has actually inspired the pen that gave these harrowing delineations of suffering ! In such a circumstance there must be a deep moral. Why keep up the memory of suffering ? Why not permit the recollection to fade away ? Why throw the weeds of desolation around life's milestones ? Why invest the shoulders of history with the scarf of the mourner ? We thought that God would have carefully obliterated the footsteps of the destroyer ; that He would have followed

closely the march of history, and left nothing but the flowers of beauty and the sparks of glory ! Instead of this, His own book is a record of human endurance even in His own service. This must be that other men who have yet to travel life's weary way may be assisted in the accumulation of "learning." Grief has been left sitting in the dark, damp valleys of history, that it might comfort grief. Sorrow pities sorrow. There is healing in the gentle touch of a wounded heart. Joy cannot talk to grief, —they would be ill-met interlocutors. Joy's sharp, ringing, chiming laugh would grate harshly on the stunned ear of grief. You can never laugh a man out of his woes. See Jesus when He comes to speak to the bereaved sisters. Though His words are concerning the joyous subject of resurrection, yet they are jewelled with the tears of His tender pity. Tears understand tears. Hearts long sundered are brought into saintly fellowship by the mastery of a common woe. I cannot, then, have any hesitation in claiming all this explanation of how the Apostle became "learned" as a proof of the adaptation of Holy Scripture to meet all the exigencies of an ever-changing experience. It was merciful on the part of God to treasure up for coming ages the memorials of human suffering ; and we should thank Him not only for preserving for us the light of the sun, but for preserving also the darkened chambers in which anguish has poured out her boiling tears !

This "learning" is not to be attained in a day ; nor can it be attained prospectively. It must come little by little, and must come from the iron lips of fact rather than from the honied tongue of theory. When God sends the need He sends the strength too ; and herein is that saying true, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." The world's burden-bearers have ever said this ; said it under scorching suns ; said it under chilling skies ; and if there has been a troubled moment of hesitation, it has been succeeded by a lifetime of childlike acquiescence.

The Apostle, then, became a "learned" man through long-endured hardship ; and we must have *time* as one condition of attaining the same reach and tone of experience. It is hard for the young heart in its first paroxysm of grief to say, "I am content." I cannot believe, and therefore will not teach, that God requires it *immediately* to pronounce such deep and solemn words. God is the most patient of teachers, and as such He will not call for the lesson the moment He has given the book. Do you think that while the deep gash is still bleeding, a young heart whose summer visions have been quenched in utter darkness can say, with venerable apostles, "I am content"? Is a man to be branded as an infidel because he cannot sing songs of joy in the presence of the disaster which has made life a ruin? Go into that sick chamber. Shut yourself up there, and serve and wait until the darkness and



the light become both alike to you. Serve through the cheerless day,—serve through the tedious night: touch every duty with the untiring hand of love: steal softly from place to place, lest a footfall should agitate the sufferer. Go on so for days and weeks; mark how all your suggestions prove useless, and how all your efforts fail. Gladly would you be cut up limb by limb if you could save the sick one. Bitterly you weep, and in anguish which devils might pity, you say,—

“When *such* friends part,  
’Tis the survivor dies.”

Long do you persist in hoping. When your heart is bursting you try to smile on the sufferer, as though there were no cause for alarm. When your bones smite one another in sore distress, and you stiffen in the cold of a great agony, you try to utter some tone of joy, but the lying word dies on the coward lip. Tell me how you feel when the terrible truth bursts upon you, that the eyes which have watched you with infinite interest for many a year can recognize you no longer, that upon them is settling the dim mist of too early death. When you realize that the heart which ever throbbed faithfully to your own is about to yield to the tyranny of Death: that the voice which was your sweetest and holiest music, will no longer break silence and charm you into the intercourse of love. Man! I ask thee, in the hearing of God, whether thou canst *then* say, “I am con-

tent"? Is not the hard-run heart overborne in that dread crisis? Can the swelling brain keep an unwavering balance? Would you not gladly rush through the nearest gate into eternity, and hail the emancipated one in the language of the better world? God is not angry with your hot tears. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth you in that saddest and dreariest hour. He says, Be patient with the child: the storm has assailed him at the roots: give him liberty to weep himself into a moment's rest. Thus God is gentle to us. He waits; He watches; He yearns; He gives us time to put off our shoes and to gather firmness while He communes with us from the flaming bush.

It is a hollow and vulgar religion—learned anywhere except at Bethlehem, Gethsemane, or Golgotha—that urges a man to say in his first agony, "I am content." Do you know what it is to have only one ewe lamb, and to have it plundered from your gentle keeping? Do you know what it is to have one tree only in whose shade you could ever find rest, and to hear the ringing blows of the axe, sharp and heavy, without having any power to arrest the arm that wields the fatal weapon? I tell you, with God's book open before me, that God will not be angry with your shiver of distress; will not pour contempt on the tears of your surging sorrow. God is tender: God is pitiful: God is sympathetic; and He will give power to the faint. I cannot believe

that dry eyes are the highest test of heroism. Indifference is no attribute of Christian manhood. No tear is expected to start into the stony eye of the statue, but the eye of life beams the more brightly for the stream of sorrow that rushes through it. The man of deep grief is not to be charged with repining and discontent. The contentment of which the Apostle speaks is, happily, compatible with the fullest expression of nature's trouble; so that the man bowed down by the tempest—riven and dismantled by the angry storm—may feel in his hottest agony a *wish* to be resigned to the highest will. This is acceptable with God. He knoweth our thought afar off. He marks the disposition long before it creates the act, and upon *that* He pours the light of His approbation.

Here is a lovely young creature, of lofty judgment, and pure heart, and hand undefiled. She is unobtrusive as a violet, constant as a star. Never did offensive word escape her well-watched lips. Never was her name associated with ungentle deed. Over her shines the summer sky; around her beam ten thousand mercies; the sun never sets on her heritage; the lines run through pleasant places. The poor pronounce her name with veneration, and the suffering listen eagerly for her words of sympathy. All the while, however, a cruel disease is insidiously striking its deadly roots; an enemy has fixed his un pitying eye on the young, fresh, noble heart; and his un-

changeable purpose is to put the fatal shaft right through it. Go and tell the doomed one that the writing of death is already sealed. Tell her that henceforward pain will be her daily portion—that every meal she eats is but an empty mockery of self-preservation—that the purest water is poured into secret fountains of poison—that the very breezes of summer are only making her more beautiful for death. I ask if, under such circumstances, you can expect the fated one to answer in a moment, “I am content”? No! She must have time for consideration; she must recover herself from the dizziness of so awful a bewilderment; she must put out her trembling hands for the rod and the staff, and after *that* she may endeavour, with quivering lip, to say, “I will fear no evil.” The young heart cannot reconcile itself to dying, all at once. The grimmest of all grim monsters cannot be called beautiful at first sight. There is no charm in his hollow eye or sunken cheek. Young life shudders at the monster’s hideous revelation; and even heaven itself looks less than heaven when it must be reached by the overthrow of so tremendous an enemy! One of the last of our loved ones who took wing from earth’s winter to heaven’s summer said, as she looked on the deep, wide, black river which men call death, “I have no doubt of going to heaven, but oh, the *crossing*, the *crossing*!” Ah! how that dreaded “crossing” made the heart cringe and shiver! Yet, when that dear,

timid traveller came down to the cold river's edge, reft of every plea but the plea that *Jesus died*, the God of the floods parted the waves before her feet, and she passed through as on dry ground ! Thus is God ever better than our fears. He sends angels before us to prepare the way. Carefully, with hands of gentlest love, are the impediments removed. In our unfaith we look onward to some awful calamity, and lo ! God puts on it a wreath of beauty, and we begin to pray where we expected to die !

We may now pass from the word "learned" to the word "*content*." The one refers to a process ; the other to a result. The solution of the difficulty may, in my opinion, be condensed into a single sentence—the Apostle was "*content*" with every state as *educational*, not *final*. The whole mystery of the word is to be explained, I submit, by some such expression as educational, not final—preliminary, not ultimate. No man could be content with *suffering* as a permanent condition of being ; but the Christian reaches that high moral estate in which he can not only accept, but even cherish it as a purifying and perfecting discipline. He is "*content*" with it as a preparation for something better ; he is "*content*" with the plough, because it is preparing the very heart which it crushes to receive the seed which shall bloom in immortal beauty and fruitfulness. An illustration will bring the idea within the capa-

city of a child. You are building a mansion ; you are engaged in a work which must be prosecuted little by little ; you begin by digging deep foundations, and when the earth is opened like a gigantic tomb, I ask, Are you "content" with this ? You answer, "Yes, as part of the process;" then you pile the roughest of the work as a great enduring basis, and I ask, Are you "content" with these immense, unpolished, and ungainly-looking stones ? You answer, "Yes, as part of the process;" you are "content," because each stage is essential to the completion, and your contentment arises from the *progress and the prophecy* rather than from each particular state of the work. Day by day you proceed, through shine and storm, "content" with everything that is done, because it is tending to the realization of your ideal. Were the work to be abandoned when it is only half done, you could not be "content" with it ; but you are content with even the half when you know that the other half *is* to be perfected. Thus our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, *while we look*, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Observe the words which are to receive the explaining emphasis. We bring "the power of an endless life" to bear upon the transient scenes of earth, and that "power" turns our heaviest woes into "afflictions *which are but for a moment,*" and

thus we are more than "content," and we "*glory* in tribulations also." The same idea may receive illustration from the case of a man who is engaged in the study of a language. He knows the price which he must pay, and has resolved to pay it. He sits down to the alphabet—the shell which contains the kernels of richest genius and attainment—and having mastered *that*, he is "content." In what sense is he "content"? He cannot read Homer, or Virgil, or Dante; how, then, can he be "content"? The answer is, he is "content" with his acquisition as *educational*, not *final*—preliminary, not ultimate. He next proceeds to the primers, and having put monosyllables together, and seen, as it were, the faintest outline of an idea gleaming through the words, he is more and more "content." He knows that this process *must* be accomplished, or he must remain in ignorance of the language. Patiently, therefore, he plods on until charmed with the numbers of the poet and informed by the narrations of the historian. The analogy would hold good also in the matter of pursuing a journey. The traveller is "content" with each mile, each scene, each tunnel, not *on its own account*, but because each brings him nearer his desired destination. Thus it should be in building human character. To-day a joy, to-morrow a grief; now on the hill-head, inhaling the life of the mountains; anon in the deep valley, cloaked with fogs or pelted with concentrated

storms; known yet unknown, honoured yet dishonoured, strong yet weak, passing through all the paradoxes which constitute a rich and manifold experience. We take life by instalments; we receive light by glimpses; we accept our joys in succession, and our sorrows come one by one; we are "content" with each, because, being anchored in the infinite ocean of divine love, we have "a good hope through grace;" we believe, therefore we are "content;" we do not count ourselves to have apprehended, but we "press toward the mark;" and we go along life's rugged way, saying, now with a song and anon with a sob, "I shall be *satisfied* when I awake with Thy likeness."

This question of contentment is emphatically one of great principles. The moment we close our eyes to the ultimate purposes of the divine government, we are enclosed in utter night. Our sorrows blind us to everything but themselves. We persist in looking at the things which are seen, rather than at the things which are *not seen*. We weep over the lock, forgetting that the key is at hand! The mysteries of life cannot be read in the artificial light of time. Heaven must interpret earth. The secrets of the first volume will be fully revealed in the second. The morning cannot tell the story of mid-day;—noon must be its own interpreter! Spring can only sing its own sweet lyric; it must leave summer to utter its deep, full, thrilling song! Don't expect too much from earth;



this acre, of which Death has taken a lease for all time, is not spacious enough to grow fruits on which immortality can feed. There is also a reflection arising from the fact that boundaries which we cannot pass are set round about us. Job asks, as if affronted, "Am I a sea or a whale that thou settest a watch over me?" Jesus recalls this fact of our limitation, and founds upon it an argument—"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" As if He had inquired, "What does all your discontent amount to? Why attempt to do that which is impossible? Why not accept the allotments of paternal providence, and regard them as ladders on which angels descend and ascend in their ministry as servants of man?" The Apostle continues the remonstrance, and in his exposition gives words of most inspiring assurance: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have." This is severe, this is dogmatic; but listen, and you will see that it is the dogmatism of love—"For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In this epistle, too, the Apostle dwells on the same theme. He talks much about himself. In many a verse round about the text the first personal pronoun may be found. He says, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both

to abound and to suffer need." This is personal detail. It sounds like boasting. The voice appears to be the voice of a man well pleased with himself. But we must hear his whole statement ; for just as our rashness is about to pronounce the Apostle an egotist, he reveals the golden secret of his mastery in the minor spheres, by saying, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" It is enough ! We deemed the boast presumptuous, whereas there blushes upon it the humility of deepest self-abasement. True contentment comes alone from Jesus. He understands us, and meets every requirement of our needy nature. He *created* angels, but he REDEEMED *man* ; if the expression may be allowed, Christ is more closely identified with man than with any other class of intelligences in the universe. He bought him with His own precious blood. Only, therefore, as man is vitally related to Christ can he enjoy the contentment which is too profound to be agitated by changing circumstances.

"These surface troubles come and go  
Like waves upon the sea ;  
The deeper depths are out of reach  
To all, my God, but Thee."

Need I employ the argument thus outlined for the purpose of clearing the field of fatal misapprehensions ? Let no one quote these words as a plea for intellectual indolence. The wilfully ignorant man is not at liberty to desecrate the language by saying,

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." No book is so provocative of intellectual exertion as God's book. From end to end there is a call for thought, and reasoning, and consideration, and growth. Every time the Bible asks man a question, it acknowledges the dignity, independence, and responsibility of *human reason*. Will you think of this, you who thoughtlessly talk about the dogmatism of revelation and the tyranny of faith? What *more* could even God himself do than submit the profoundest questions to your personal consideration and decision? There is in reality no book which confers so much honour on human reason as the very book which is blasphemously charged with ignoring it. Let no man use this text as a plea for moral deformity, saying, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This is not contentment. Contentment is not a negative but a positive condition of being. To claim contentment while in a state of unpardoned guilt, is to trifle with the foundations of moral life and government, and to insult, in one terrific act, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Sin and discontentment can never be dissociated. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." I will not therefore permit the rebellious to chant the words which can be truly uttered only by the lips of the loyal. Alas! are not the best of men occasionally rebellious? Much have I been reprov'd on this

point. It was once my lot to wait upon a dying loved one—to mark her shrivelling cheek, and to weep over her dimming eyes. Such discipline never befel me. Aforetime I had fled from death, and had never looked upon any human being while enfolded in the last undreaming sleep. But now Death came to wage war on my own hearth, and there was terrible earnestness in his method. He smote youth, and beauty, and tenderness, and then mocked the ruin he was working. In a whisper the dying one asked me to read some of the words of Jesus—she knew that Jesus had fought and conquered the last enemy, and much she loved the Saviour's name. Never was harder task allotted me, for grief conquers speech. I would rather have faced a ravening lion than undertaken that duty. I read, with hurried expression, how the blind man spake to Jesus about his blindness, saying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Then the dying hearer said, "Don't you berebellious, but utter that cry mightily." The word cleft my heart. The dying seeking to inspire the living with hope and confidence so impressed me, that when the last sweet breath passed from the stricken breast, I called her **MORE THAN CONQUEROR.**

Do not cherish your griefs. They do but wear out the finest springs and faculties of nature. You must have grief. It is the lot of man : but let grief lean her aching head on great principle ; let her pour

her tears on the pitying bosom of the Saviour ; and then round about her shall shine the rainbow which ever speaks of an unchanging covenant.

It would appear as though some persons delighted to prolong their grief. This may be affirmed even of some who profess Christianity. From the ancient church there comes a voice which such mistaken ones should heed : " Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Are there not predictions which proclaim the final conquest of the trustful heart, and the perpetual overthrow of the rebellious spirit ? " Let not thine heart envy sinners : but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." If we found our judgment upon mere accidents, we shall stumble as the blind, we shall err as those who have no understanding. " When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish ; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." God shall mock the men of false contentment, and on their boasted palaces He shall hail destroying fire ! " There shall be no reward to the evil man ; the candle of the wicked shall be put out." We are not called upon to criticize God's moral government. God is His own interpreter. " Cast thy burden upon the Lord ; trust also in Him ; and He shall bring it to pass." This is the only method by which the spirit can know the meaning, the quiet, the joy, of perpetual content. Our repining dishonours Christ. It implies a lack of power on His part to give satisfaction to the

aching heart. Every act of distrust is an act of dishonour towards the Saviour. Think, if Christ can carry the universe, is He not able to carry the handful of dust which you call your "property"? If He can govern and control all the affairs of creation, is He unequal to the supervision of your insignificant circumstances? Be *wise*! Be *wise now*! "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS  
OF THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE  
TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

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“PAUL and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ” [the most royal title which human beings can assume], “to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” [the saints take precedence of the bishops and deacons, forasmuch as character is immortal, while office is but temporary]:

Verses 2, 3. “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” [All blessing is with the Absolute: even the chief of the apostles can only bless ministerially, not primarily.] “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” [My whole remembrance of you is accompanied with thanks to God.—*Alford*.]

“Remembrance” is a very heaven or hell. Memory is the genius that ever follows a man persistently as his own shadow, and essentially as his own blood. A man of gladsome recollections can never be absolutely *alone*. The Philippians were a perpetual joy to the Apostle. Whenever he took

an excursion across the mountains and through the valleys of his gone lifetime, he caught sight of the benevolent and loving Philippians, and their very names gladdened him, as a long-absent traveller might be gladdened by the glittering pinnacles of the city of his home.

(2.) Think of the beauty of the circumstance that Paul thanked God for the blessing of kind, loving, helpful men. Man can bless man. Hearts can bring the burning dawn into hearts that have been saddened through a weary night-time. *Man serves God by aiding God's servants.*

(3.) The more enlarged and susceptible the heart, the more easily can service be rendered to it. It is easier to win the benediction of a great and noble heart, than of a withered and sapless *bone*. Look at *Elisha* and the woman of Shunem; see how *Christ* brightened into a fuller-orbed Divinity when He blessed the woman for her one box of nard; and see how *Paul* prostrated himself before God when he remembered the little kindnesses of the Philippians.

(4.) Learn how good a thing it is to serve the *great*, and inferentially, how sublime a thing it is to live and die in the service of the GREATEST. If Paul remembered the benefactions of his friends, he has also placed on record this testimony—"God is not unrighteous to *forget* your work of faith and labour of love." In both cases it is a question of



memory. The Apostle remembers, and God remembers ; so that the deeds of the good are rewarded with immortal honour. [Turn this argument upon the man who never does a good deed ! Will God forget *him* ?]

(5.) Each of us should *leave a memory that shall be cherished and blessed*. A pleasant recollection of the Philippians would be immortal as the consciousness of the Apostle. A noble and honourable life is not necessarily made up of great efforts—stupendous and exhausting attempts to achieve some dazzling victory,—but of little acts of consideration, well-timed smiles of encouragement and hope, gentle words of sympathy, and generous interpretations of conduct. The sun does not wait until he can blaze forth in the pomp and glory of mid-day : first the herald streak ; the shaping off and fringing of the slumberous clouds ; the purple beauty ; the multiplying and conquering fire ; until noon is king, and day has forgotten night ! Begin humbly. If we cannot articulate an apostle's prayer, we may heave a brother's sigh. *Not one of us, how hidden and feeble soever, need live a sterile life.*

(6.) Every man must determine for himself whether he will so live that "every remembrance" of him shall induce thankfulness to God, or his name be a burden which memory would willingly cast off.

(7.) The Apostle stands prominently forth as an

illustrious man, while the Philippians are not known to us by more than their general name. The *hidden* workers are not on that account to deem themselves useless. Where would the *oak* be but for hidden and invisible agents? How much is the teacher, who guides others to heaven, indebted even for some of his most effective qualifications to the general influence of those who make his house a home, and whose names are not registered on the scrolls of fame!

Verses 4, 5. "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

Prayer may be varied according to the different spiritual moods of the suppliant. In some instances prayer may hardly rise beyond a mere duty; in other cases it may become the supreme joy of the heart. In this instance the Apostle assures the Philippians that he experienced the most exquisite joy in remembering them before God in prayer: as if, in the overflowing of his affection, he always made haste to intercede for them, and lingered joyfully in pleading for their growth and happiness. Man cannot always pray in the same mood. Sometimes the intercessor may "rejoice in spirit," and sometimes he may groan and be troubled. The mood need not impair the sincerity. You may perform the same journey through a thick and troubled

atmosphere, as well as through the brightness and calm of the summer light: the path is the same, the goal is the same, the purpose is the same; yet in the one case the soul may sit as a bird with folded wings, and in the other it may be soaring and singing through the streaming glory.

"Your fellowship in the gospel" I take to signify their unanimity, their entireness of accord one with another; and I see no reason why the Apostle himself should not be included in that "fellowship." This expansion of the idea (which I cannot see to be forbidden, even by the grammar of the passage) would suggest—*the centralizing influence of God's redeeming and sanctifying idea*. No agent, no principle, no doctrine has done so much, or can do so much, in the eduction and consolidation of heart-power, as the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul thanks God with joy for the "fellowship of the gospel" among the Philippians; *i. e.*, for their mutual accord, their oneness, their brotherhood of spirit and action. This may so far exhaust the grammatical signification of the language; but the fact that the Apostle is joyfully thankful for this unanimity among the Philippians shows that he himself was one with them, and this circumstance brings us into the presence of the sublime idea, that *Christianity is the most influential of all heart-uniting forces*. Men who are one in Christ are united in the highest ranges of their nature. They

are not one *necessarily* in the lower and temporary appetencies of their manhood, but in the vitalities of their being. Death cannot break the seal that binds the friendships of the good. Distance cannot divide the sympathetic. Paul is in Rome; his friends at Philippi: but in the great globe-heart of the Apostle, Rome and Philippi are but different names of the same place. The union of the church is guaranteed by the immortality of the principles on which it is founded. *The moral is the immortal.*

Verse 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Whether this "good work" relates entirely to the *special* act of beneficence which had called forth this epistle, may be fairly disputed. Taken upon this narrow ground, the Apostle's joyfulness and thankfulness in prayer would be but the refinement of selfishness. As will appear in the sequel, the Philippians had sent some substantial token of their appreciation of the Apostle's labours; but to limit this expression of confidence to such a display of affection would be to impoverish and circumscribe the passage. The Apostle lays down a great principle respecting the divine method of working, viz., *to begin is to finish*; and that principle, wide enough to encompass the universe, will also comprehend every detail and punctilio

of christian service. (1) God works by a plan, —His plan is to *prepare manhood for the final day*, “the day of Jesus Christ” (by which may be signified a period of time, or a perfection of development; the “day” of death and judgment, or the day of completeness in christian manhood). (2) God is not fickle in the prosecution of His purposes; He begins, not that He may conduct an *experiment*, but that He may *perform* a design. (3) God has so revealed Himself in history in the education of the individual and the training of society, as to justify the most emphatic expression of “confidence” on the part of His church. The past foretells the future. God hath made His servants masters of the ages, so far as certainty with respect to His own method and purpose of government are concerned. The creature of a day is thus enabled to speak with “confidence” of the outgoings of the Eternal. The PAST is the only tangible and visible *prophet* that God hath left in His church. When the world was young, the world needed Elijahs, Ezechiels, and Daniels; but the richer the world becomes in *history*, the bolder, and louder, and sweeter will be its tone of “confidence.” God cannot publish any amended edition of Himself. You may, therefore, make the *past* the source of the widest inferences.

Verse 7. “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as

both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

The sixth verse was like the peal of a trumpet; the seventh is the low, sweet music of the summer morning. There is an expression here of singular beauty: "I have you in my heart." Who can measure the circumference of a truly philanthropic heart? Has arithmetic any cunning art by which to calculate the girth of that organ of affection? A man in Rome carrying the Philippian church in his heart! (1) He who carries the world *elsewhere than in his heart* will soon wish to cast off his burden. (2) He who carries the good in his heart can never be desolate. Loneliness is an impossibility to the well-stored heart. (3) He whose heart is engaged with the tender offices of affection is *the profoundest interpreter and the most efficient servant of mankind*. (4) He who enshrines his benefactors in his heart has broken the dominion of selfishness.

In this verse the Apostle recurs to the wider idea of the "fellowship of the gospel," which was suggested in connection with the fifth verse,—  
"Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace." The Apostle and the Philippians, being one in their faith in Christ, were one also in their love of each other. Being one with the Apostle in Christ, they were one

with him in all the vicissitudes of his experience. He refers to himself as in two different situations : in the one he was bound as a prisoner ; in the other he was defending and confirming the gospel. In each case the Philippians were "partakers of his grace." (1) The advocacy of the best of causes may bring a man into social humiliation. (2) Social humiliation does not necessarily involve moral dishonour. (3) While the morally honourable are suffering from social humiliation they will not be abandoned by the "partakers" of the same "grace." Another proof of the uniting and consolidating force of Christianity.

Verse 8. "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." [All real spiritual love is but a portion of the great love wherewith He hath loved us, which lives and yearns in all who are vitally united to Him.—*Alford*.]

Saints "longing" for saints is a prophecy that all saints are destined to be brought into one assembly. God will satisfy all the desires which He creates ; He will feed the soul which He has made hungry ; and as He has given us the *spirit* of true fellowship, so will He supply the means of its full *enjoyment*. Out of all this comes heaven. The good "longing" for the good ; the creature yearning for the Creator ; the redeemed sighing for the Redeemer ; the dew of the morning trem-

bling with the hope of being taken up by the Infinite Light: what is all this but a premonition of celestial life?

The Apostle, having thus told the Philippians of his praying and his longing, presents a summary of his prayer:—

Verses 9, 10, 11. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

In one word, the Apostle prayed that the Philippians might *grow*. It will be found to consist with the first principles of human nature, that *moral dwarfs never pray that others may become moral giants*. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." A man cannot transcend himself. The loftier and purer a man's aspirations are, the more noble and divine is the man. Only the firmament can embrace the stars!

(1.) The Apostle prays that "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;" that love may abound in "*moral tact*" (De Wette). True love is intelligent. We are to love God with all our *mind*. As knowledge is the basis of faith, so also it is the first condition of love.



(2.) "That ye may approve things that are excellent." The Apostle prays for an enlargement and quickening of the discriminative faculty, that the Philippians might distinguish between things that differ, and that so distinguishing they might elect the right. A man is known by his verdicts. The poet sees a deeper reading in the leaves of the summer than the thoughtless man, who sees nothing in them but a day's bread for a day's work. The artist *sees* where the clown but *looks*. Paul wished the faculty of discrimination to be so quickened, that the Philippians might ever see the "excellent," and instantly approve it. The more we love Christ the more will we be qualified to perceive every charm in moral life. He who truly *approves* the excellent will constantly *defend* the excellent, and thus a perfect "fellowship" in the gospel will be established throughout the church.

(3.) "That ye may be sincere and without offence" [without stumbling, — *Alford*] "till the day of Christ." The word "sincere" has a double meaning. Take the word from the Greek, and it signifies *that which is proved in the sunlight*. An article may be held so that the rays of the sun may reveal any defect or flaw in the substance or the manufacture. Christians are to be so true that the solar light of infinite rectitude cannot find any stain or derangement in their character. Take the word from the Latin, and the literal signification

is, *without wax*; the reference being to clarified honey, which is free from all admixture: all is pure. The christian life is to be so refined, so clarified, as to be thoroughly free from all foreign elements.

(4.) "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." The Apostle, beginning at the centre, finds his way to the circumference: beginning with the spiritual, he culminates in the practical. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." See the connection between *Christ* and *fruit*. Christ bids His people bring forth "much fruit:" have His people *merit*, then? The answer is, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Where is *boasting*?

This call to practical life shows that Christianity is not a mocking pretence, or a theological dream, or a speculative science, but a sublime, vital, and vitalizing reality.

The doctrines acknowledged in this prayer are,—(1) That christian life is progressive—"more and more." (2) That God is ready to co-operate with His people for their moral enrichment. (3) That the entire christian manhood is to bear fruit—"being *filled*."

Verses 12, 13, 14. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

The *Philippians* looked upon the imprisonment as a calamity; *Paul* assures them that it was an element of prosperity. This shows how much our estimate of men and things *depends upon the angle from which we conduct the examination*. Circumstances are often the only lexicons which can determine the meaning of words. While the *Philippians* were saying "midnight," the Apostle was saying "noon:" "ruin" at Philippi meant "coronation" at Rome. Can the man at the mountain-foot see as far as the man on the mountain-head? Much depends on the *plane* of vision, as well as upon the optical power. There is a germ of prophecy here—*by-and-by we shall see life from higher stand-points*. Here is a light which the student would do well to hold over his darkest problems, viz., It is better to study at Rome than at Philippi; better under the crowned arch of day than under the black bridge of night!

The idea to be dwelt upon most emphatically is, —That circumstances the most untoward may in reality be advancing the divine kingdom among

men. The *fact* is known at Philippi, but the *interpretation* must come from Rome. This idea may be generalized so as to encompass all God's government. Thus generalized it would stand,—Not one of the divine purposes can ultimately fail of completion. Every purpose of God that is to take effect in the moral sphere may be *thwarted*, but the outcome of the ages will show that God's great plan has been realized in every tittle. God will redeem His promise to His anointed. He will cause all the historic lines to converge in the redemptive idea. We cannot see all that He is doing. We wonder and weep at Philippi; but from the Rome of the heavens He says, "All things fall out unto the furtherance of the gospel."

(1) God's providence not to be interpreted in fragments. (2) The *moral* is higher than the *personal*: Paul is in prison, but the gospel is free! (3) The bonds of one man may give inspiration to the liberty of another; "many of the brethren waxed confident." (4) The spread of the gospel depends upon no one man. (5) Even the afflicted Christian has a mission. Paul's "bonds" were the means of making the gospel more and more known.

Verses 15 to 18. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention" [self-seeking], "not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds;

but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

(1) Diverse developments of human disposition. (2) The possibility of doing a good deed through a bad motive. (3) The impossibility of entirely concealing motives. (4) The actions of self-seekers turned into the good man's sources of joy. (5) Man is never so diabolized as when making a good cause the means of grieving and tormenting the church. (6) The mere fact that a man preaches Christ is not a proof of his personal salvation; and if this can be affirmed of *preaching*, how much more powerfully may it be affirmed of *hearing*!

This paragraph furnishes matter for a discourse on—*two voices on the same subject; or, the voice of selfishness, and the voice of love.*

Verse 19. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

(1) Mark the *confidence* of the declaration—"I know." Not an angel in heaven could utter a truer note of triumph. *Righteousness is a prophetic power.* The righteous man can infallibly predict the issue of moral operations. (2) Mark the *ground* of this confidence; "this shall turn to

my salvation." What is the "*this*" referred to? *The preaching of Christ*. The Apostle's joy does not arise from the fact that certain *persons* preached, but from the higher fact that *Christ* was preached. It was impossible that the Apostle could rejoice that *bad men* were working; he rejoiced that a *good work* was being done. (3) Mark that *the extension of the truth is the best guarantee of personal happiness*. The Apostle knew that the less comprehended the greater as truly in one department as in another. To him, *moral victory meant personal deliverance*. A man of less moral grandeur would have started the argument from himself, saying, with selfish vaunt, Let *me* be free, and then the *gospel* shall triumph: he would have pivoted the question on himself; but the Apostle knew nothing of such littleness and self-idolatry; he said, "Let *Christ* be preached, and Christ's *servant* shall in due time be free. When it goes well with the *master*, it goes well with the *servant*. I believe that the word "salvation" does *not* relate to the safety of his soul, but to the deliverance of his body; and, accepting the word in that sense, I can overhear the Apostle, as he gathers his chain closer around him, saying, "The *truth* shall break these links. Some of those men outside are doing other than they set out to do: God will turn their purposes upside down. They thought to harden and fasten these links, whereas they are in very deed breaking

them! Let them go on; let Christ be more and more talked about, and more and more understood, and then that prison door shall fall back, and I shall be free as the light!" When the church acts on this great principle, there will be less fuss, less anxiety for the truth, less quaking about little personal interests, less self-protrusion and self-applause. Rightly looked at, no man is so truly serving himself as when he is magnanimously endeavouring to serve others. (4) Mark that *the gospel has everything to hope from being allowed to reveal its own credentials*. Proclaim it (ministers, missionaries, teachers)! It sounds well from *any* lips (philosophers, babes and sucklings, unlearned). By whomsoever pronounced, the celestial fire will strike through every syllable, and the place of its proclamation shall be sacred as the Mount of God! (5) Mark that the Apostle associates this result ("my salvation") with the prayers of the Philippians. Not a man in the church is so far advanced as to be beyond the range of prayer. Intercession embraces all human kind! See how the greatest man in the church may be served *by the supplication of the good*. A child may help an apostle. (Such is the mystery of *moral* power.)

Verses 20, 21. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether

it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

(1) "Expectation" and "hope;" these are words which connect the heart with the *future*. (2) No power can so light up the future, and throw over it the hues of immortal beauty, as childlike trust in God. (3) The man who is living without "expectation" and "hope" is living only half a life; but he who is living on *false* expectations and *false* hopes is wasting life. (4) It is right that the *body* should be turned to moral account. (Christ purchased the whole man.) The passions are not to have their own wild way. The blood is not to be master of the man. (5) The possibility of being ready for either earthly or heavenly life. Paul drew his programme of life from the heart of the Saviour. He lighted his torch at the sun! (6) Vital identification with Christ is the secret of such readiness. "For to me to live is Christ,"—I have one idea; I live Christ; I reproduce the Saviour; I am ever in pursuit of the objects which engage His affections; I and my Saviour are one.

That which a man loves *supremely* is that for which he lives (money, fame, pleasure, &c.) The lofty altitude of moral nature to which we have to aspire *is to find in Christ our only reason for living*. Apart from this, the yearnings, aspirations, and voids of humanity can never be satisfied. (1)  
LIFE IN CHRIST COMPREHENDS ALL TRUE LIFE .



(science, art, beauty, music, all that adorns the saint, all that strengthens the worker, all that sustains the sufferer). A life rooted in Christ will bear all manner of fruits, and be beautiful with all the hues of heaven. (*Into what base are our life-roots struck?*) (2) LIFE IN CHRIST CAN SEE THE ULTERIOR PHASE OF WHAT MEN CALL DEATH. "To die is *gain*." The eye of true life can see clear through the dispensation of dying, and behold the "gain;" can see straight through the troubled night of the final act of man upon earth, and gladden itself with the sight of the morning glory that falls for ever on the hills of heaven. To die is *mystery*; to die is *speculation*; to die is life's most desperate *venture*; to die is life's *annihilation*; this is the creed of those whose life is not centred in Christ. (Compare this creed with the "gain" which Christianity discloses.)

Verses 22 to 26. "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

(1) The *personal* weighed with the *public*, or

the difficulties of the veteran philanthropist. (2) Man's sublimest reason for not wishing immediate translation to glory is that he may be of *spiritual service* to the world. (3) The next best condition to that of being "with Christ" in heaven, is to be working for Christ's people on earth. Paul puts two things in apposition, viz., "to be with *Christ*," and "to abide with *you*:" how could there be hesitation in deciding the choice? *Selfishness* could not have hesitated. *True*; but selfishness would never have been called upon to make the election. *Benevolence* has its difficulties as well as selfishness. Love lifts a finger to the heavens, and points another to the earth. The choice is between "gain" and service; and rightly-estimated service *is* gain. It is worth all pain and inconvenience to remain out of heaven so long as you can prepare your contemporaries for the skies. You are "with Christ" so long as you are with His *work*: there is, indeed, a fuller revelation to be made—there is a veil to be passed—yet the union is begun. Our eyes are holden, that we should not know Him; but His breath is our life, and His touch our omnipotence. The Apostle is not a *dreamy contemplatist*, who is always wishing for some more pleasant conditions of existence. He is a *worker*, who finds satisfaction in labour, and joy in anticipation. There is a disease in the church for which I can find no appropriate name; it may, however, be described symp-

tomatically. Persons who are afflicted with it seem to think that *religion consists in wishing for heaven*. They hold their heads so erectly as not to see the spiritual darkness, the moral lunacy, the social disintegration by which they are surrounded. They are dreamers, contemplatists, transcendentalists; but are they *Christians*? They are fond of hymns that warble the blessedness of heaven; they revel in texts that describe the rest, the pleasure, the music, the serenity, the fascinations of the celestial state. Let such diseased ones mark how the Apostle conjoins such words as "labour" and "gain," and how he balances what is "needful" for man with what would be pleasant to himself; and let them be rebuked and stimulated by the joy with which he anticipated restoration to the laborious life of the apostolate. (4) There is only one world in which you can serve man *evangelically*; do not be in indecent haste to escape the opportunity! When you *wish* to enter heaven, may you have a strong drawing to the service which is still to be done on earth; may you be "in a strait." (5) God never leaves the earth entirely destitute of great men. Elijah may deem himself alone, not knowing that there are seven thousand children of truth who have never kissed the world's dumb god.

Verses 27 to 30. "Only let your conversation" [citizenship] "be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may

hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which" [faith of the gospel] "is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me" [when I was at Philippi, Acts xvi.], "and now hear to be in me."

This is a call to a threefold manifestation of spiritual life: (a) to holiness; (b) to unanimity; (c) to courage.

I. TO HOLINESS.—"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." As if he had said, I have *one* dominating wish in reference to you, or this is my highest desire on your behalf. *It is well to know what God's princes wish for us.* This is a voice from the highest range of christian experience. The noblest desire which one man can cherish for another is that he may be like Jesus. *There is but one ideal life in the church.* Here, however, is a difficulty; *how can the lowest copy the highest?* Why put an absolutely perfect design before a pupil devoid of culture and devoid of skill? Would it not have been wiser to have set forth a man who excelled in *one* moral feature, and to have said, "Copy *that*"? and then to have presented a second, who exemplified another beauty, and to have said, "Transcribe *that*"? and so on until all

the graces had been gradually acquired? Would not such an arrangement have encouraged desponding man? Instead of this we have set before us as our example, *absolute perfection—infinite holiness!* Is not this exorbitant? Is it not demanding too much of the crushed and helpless sinner? Let us see. What does moral perfection *begin* in? It begins in the disposition, in the will, in the heart. If you are urged to escape from polar winter, with its ice, and snow, and frost, and barrenness, to tropical summer, with its warmth, and flowers, and geniality, and luxuriance, is it meant that you are to accomplish the journey at one long stride, or that it is to be completed step by step, little by little? When a child is required to become perfect as a musician, is it intended that in one day his uncrafty fingers shall liberate the angel-strains that are jailed in the musical instrument? Or is it meant that he shall master the gamut, and grope his way through the scale, and gently touch the unknown notes to ascertain, as if by a whisper, whether they are the strains of which he is in quest, and proceed with all diligence and zeal until the instrument shall tell all its secrets, and shake with many-voiced delight at the touch of his friendly hand? Were you to tell an acorn to become perfect as an oak, would you mean that all the growing was to be completed in a night, or that the development was to proceed gradually,

unfolding branch after branch, bud after bud, leaf after leaf, till it became a great cathedral-tree, in which the feathered choristers should pour out their songs in the hearing of God? It is even so with our Saviour. When He tells us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, He means that we are to *grow* in grace; we are to "press toward the mark;" we are to set our faces towards the holy temple. Not only so. In all our growing and striving Christ himself is with us, and His grace is all-sufficient. "Work out your own salvation," &c. Be it far from me to speak harshly to any man struggling after higher manhood. My own forty days in the wilderness are not yet finished. Satan is still with me, &c.

II. TO UNANIMITY.—"That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind serving together for the faith of the gospel." *Monotony* is not what is meant by unanimity. What is the root of true unity? *We are one in our love and service of Christ.* Christendom is in reality one, though apparently many. The coat is a coat of many colours, but the heart is one. This is particularly seen in the time of threatened *danger*. The armies of defence have never come from *any particular section* of the church. The young sometimes reason thus:—There is so much division in the church—there are so many sects, parties, and divisions, that we have determined, therefore (O unhappy and illogical

“therefore”!), to cast off religion altogether. Try this reasoning by analogy. Take it into the question of *architecture*, and the parallel would be this:—There are so many styles of building, and so many modifications and interpenetrations of those styles,—some houses are round, and some square; some Doric, and some Gothic,—that we are really so perplexed with the varieties, that we have renounced architecture altogether, and have resolved to reside day and night in the open air! Try it again in the matter of *clothing*, and run the analogy. Try it in the question of *patriotism*, and the endless shades of political party, &c. Do men give up *business* because some tradesmen become insolvent? &c. Do you give up housekeeping because some chimneys smoke? &c.

III. TO COURAGE.—“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” “Unto you it is given to suffer.” If a man is not to be terrified by his “adversaries,” by whom is he to be terrified? Timidity is a symptom of moral feebleness. Timidity is an impediment in the path of moral progress. Timidity on the part of one may dishearten the courage of a multitude. Timidity arises from distrust of God. There is not a passage in all God’s word in favour of timidity. “Straight on!” is God’s command, and He will frighten the lions from before your feet. The strong in heart are called to *suffer*. Suffering is education; suffer-

ing is a means of grace. There is a martyrdom of the *body*; there is a deeper martyrdom of the *spirit*. Think of the hidden and silent heroism that is going on every day. How many a man, otherwise mighty, fails in *suffering*! How many a man, too, of noble powers and enlarged culture, for want of strength in a crisis—the courage to utter a *decisive* word—fails and trembles, and becomes the prey of the mean! The Apostle here teaches that fearlessness in strife is to be associated with magnanimity in endurance.



HOMILETIC ANALYSIS—(*Continued*).

## CHAPTER ii., 1—11.

Verses 1, 2. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

(1.) The "if" is not in this case the sign of doubt or hesitation, but, on the contrary, the sign of the most assured certainty. When persons wish to declare the vastness of an assembly, they sometimes make use of such an expression as—"If there was *one* man present, there were two thousand;" the "if" being not the word of *doubt*, but of certainty. As employed by Paul, it is equivalent to—"If there is any water in the sea, or if there is any light in the sun."

(2.) Consolation, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels and mercies, are expressions which signify much in common. This appeal of the Apostle is a burst of tenderness. Affection delights in repetition. Love amplifies its expressions to the utmost. Love is an eloquent rhetorician; artless, yet full of art. These are expressions full of summer light and beauty, which are revealed only to the eye of the heart.

(3.) Paul having laid his basis in the very heart of Christ, makes an appeal—"Fulfil ye my joy."

It is right to interject one's *personality* as an element in an argument for brotherhood and consolidation in the church. It appears to be an infinite descent from Christ to Paul, but in reality it is no descent; in this argument Christ's purpose and Paul's desire are identical. The soul has moods which bring it close to the heart of God. Paul appears before the Philippians more as a saint than as a logician, and in that capacity Christ and the "servant" are one. The Apostle likens his "joy" to a cup that is nearly full, and intimates that unanimity in the church would fill it perfectly—would make it overflow. See the importance even of a *single* element. An atom may be necessary to perfection. Beauty may depend upon the straightness or curve of a single line.

Verses 3, 4. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

(1) There are two ways of doing even the best work; "through strife," and through love. This was seen in the first chapter, where two classes of preachers are described. (2) Entire sympathy with Christ will always heighten man's appreciation of man. (3) Christianity is thus the only humanizing and fraternizing religion. (4) Self-seeking is in utter antagonism to the spirit of Christianity.

(5) Christianity never encourages a degrading view of human nature. Man is to be "esteemed" by man. Christians are to recognize each other's excellencies. Love's eye is quick to detect virtue in another.

Up to this point, Paul continues his appeal for *unanimity*. The spirit of this appeal is most suggestive; it is the spirit of profound and tender sympathy with Christ. When history gives up its dead, it will be found that where the rod has conquered its tens, love has conquered its thousands. This anxiety for entire oneness in the church is in harmony with the spirit of Christ's intercessory address to the Father. Paul was wont to call for one-mindedness: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." *Absence of union is a reflection upon the uniting force.* What is the uniting force in a christian church? *The love of Christ.* Where, then, there is disunion it is plainly to be inferred that there is either not sufficient of this love, or that this love is unequal to the exigencies of the case. Hence the grandeur and urgency of the appeal—"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ;" as though he had said, "Remember that Christ's love is on trial; consider that men are

looking upon you as they would look upon an experiment, and that not *you* only, but Christ himself will be deeply involved in the event of failure." How is it that a discordant church is a reflection upon the moral power of the Saviour? *Without Christ the church could not be in existence.* The world has a right to compare the deeds of the servant with the spirit of the Master, because the connection is *moral*, and consequently involves responsibility. Take the case on a lower ground. A recently-erected edifice has fallen : how do men treat the fact? They instantly connect it with the architect or the builder. When a chemical experiment has failed, how is it looked upon? Instantly the manipulator is blamed for want of skill, or for want of judgment in the selection of the quality of his materials. So all the practices of the church are carried back to Christ, and *He* is magnified, or "crucified afresh," according to their nature.

While Paul is thus appealing for moral concord, and appealing in the spirit of tenderest love, to what conclusion are we to come on the subject of mutual discipline? Are charity and justice to be sundered? Is there not to be a law of *right* in the church? Is the garment of love to be thrown over the leper? Paul shall answer for himself: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine

which ye have learned ; and avoid them." "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." The tones vary, but the voice is the same. Was Paul inconsistent? Are the pleading of love and the crash of condemnation accordant? *It is consistency alone that can afford to be apparently inconsistent.* Christ called Herod a fox, and said that Nathanael was without guile. God alone can be warm as summer and chilling as winter. The Apostle is perfectly consistent ; the voice is as truly one, as is the voice of the mother when she sings her child to slumber, or shrieks at the approach of the ravenous beast.

Verses 5 to 11. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This comprehensive passage, I suggest, can be

used for purely theological purposes only *by accommodation*. Looked at in connection with its surroundings, it appears to be rather a practical exhortation than a theological disquisition. Paul is not arguing a doctrinal point; he is not rebutting doctrinal heresy; there is no evidence that the Philippians held incorrect opinions as to the pre-existence, the divinity, or the incarnation of the Saviour. This summary, therefore, is made, not for purely doctrinal or theological purposes, but as the *ground-work of a powerful appeal for the cultivation of a right spirit*. This being clearly understood, the sphere of practical inference is vividly defined. The Apostle takes for granted that the Philippians are sound in the faith. There is nothing in their theological creed to be rectified. There is a *practical* point to be attained, and in its attainment it is necessary to keep in view all that has been done, and the way in which it has been done, by the one Redeeming Life of humanity.

Paul's argument, based upon the Messianic history, may be thrown into some such shape as this:—You, Philippians, have been a great joy to me; I thank my God on every remembrance of you. But my joy is not quite fulfilled: your unanimity is not perfect; I hear of murmurings and disputings among you. I must entreat you in relation to this matter: "Let this mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus." That mind was condescending, un-

selfish, most loving. Some of you, perhaps, imagine that you are too elevated and dignified to mingle with others: let me assure you that this is a mistake, and quite contrary to the spirit of Jesus. Christ was infinitely elevated, and yet He stooped; He was of reputation among the highest intelligences, yet He "made Himself of no reputation;" He was "in the form of God," yet "took upon Him the form of a servant." He is our exemplar: let this mind be in you that was also in Him, then nothing shall be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each shall esteem other better than themselves. I speak unto you all, bishops and deacons alike, and declare that we are right, and true, and influential only as we are moulded after the example of the self-renouncing and condescending Saviour.

This, I submit, is all that was meant by this epitome of Christ's history. So far as the argument was strictly concerned, Paul might have paused at the fifth verse, saying, with all possible condensation of meaning, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." All that follows is illustrative,—is thrown in to give breadth, and vividness, and precision, to the words "this mind." The highest should prove his highness by serving the lowly. There is no elevation too lofty to condescend to the service of the humblest of mankind. This is the great lesson taught by the verses in hand.

That those verses do, by implication and direct statement, teach more, it would be useless to deny. They express many of the fundamental truths of Christianity. They declare in plainest terms the pre-existence of Jesus, and His co-equality with the Father; but they do this in order to invest with commanding attraction and authority a great practical duty. Thus *every feature in christian character may be carried back, so to speak, and examined in the light of the whole history of Christ*. In other words, the Christian is always representing or misrepresenting CHRIST.

Looked at apart from their special signification and application, these delineations of Christ *reveal the true method of rendering moral service to man*. Human deliverance and progress will remain a *theory* only until men come to work upon the method here stated. Great philanthropic programmes must begin at Bethlehem, and comprehend the mysteries of Golgotha, if ever they would ascend from Bethany into the heavens. He who would make life a redemptive mission must go to the very base of society, and begin his work there. Men invariably fail when they begin at the high twig rather than the buried root. To serve man, Christ became man. So in serving others we must identify ourselves with them. Christ was in the darkness, but the darkness was not in Him. This identification of Himself with the human race made Christ



*accessible to all classes.* Man needed for a season—only for a season, as one summer in the year is enough—a visible manifestation of God. So by coming to us, and being like us, and humbling Himself to the death of the cross, He saved us. We, too, in our philanthropic work must *go down*. Kings are only the blossomings of the great communal tree. “Down to the roots” is the cry of true philanthropy. (2) Christ’s piety was not a mere index-finger. Instead of saying, “*That* is the way,” He said, “*I* am the way.” A man’s whole moral vitality must constitute his redeeming power. Men fail when they say “*that*” instead of “*I* ;” when they give a pronoun instead of the living substantive of their own sanctified character. Instead of seeing how the world’s misery looks after it has flowed from a secretarial pen, and taken form upon the clean foolscap of a great society, we should lay our own white hand on the gashed and quaking heart of humanity. (3) Does it not *degrade* a man to have this personal association with human vice and misery? The answer may be given in a question, Was *Christ* degraded? More ; go into the territories of guilt and wretchedness upon any other business than that of Christ, and you *will* be degraded. A man’s spirit will determine his fate. Benevolence will come forth unpolluted as a sunbeam, beautiful as summer’s purest flower. (4) *Condescension* is not degrada-

tion. How do you teach a child to read? By beginning at the rudimentary line; by joining him at the very earliest point of inquiry, and accompanying him patiently through all the introductory processes. So Christ does in the moral education of the race. He speaks in monosyllables as it were. He pronounces words with emphasis, giving each a wide circumference, until every tone penetrates the listener's ear. (5) Are we to come down to men, or are men to be brought up to us? *Both!* With Christ as our example, I answer, *Be Godlike, and come down to those whom you would save!* "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Not only have we a revelation of the true method of rendering moral service to man, but a revelation of the glory which is in reserve for those who adopt this method. Christ had that glory of right; His followers have it of grace. Christ promises co-equality of exaltation to those who "overcome." They "shall sit with Me on My throne." (1) God overrules the most improbable means to the accomplishment of the greatest ends. (2) The true worker is never finally overlooked. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great." Why? "*Because he hath poured out his soul unto death.*" In apparent weakness may be the sublimest mystery of power. A man may be conquering even when in a very passion of suffering.

\*.\* The foregoing analysis is submitted as a specimen of the manner in which the Author proposes to analyze the whole of the New Testament, should he be encouraged to do so by the religious public. There are already several works devoted to a critical examination of the philology of the sacred text; it is believed that a work which shall disclose the *moral idea* of the New Testament, and show its application to the life of to-day, would be useful to a large class of readers.

GREAT PURPOSES AND INTERRUPTIVE  
VOICES.

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MATTHEW xvi. 21—26.

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"FROM that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go." Special emphasis should be laid upon the word "must," in order to discover the depth and range of the idea which the speaker seeks to convey. The

emphasis, so placed, gives us the utterance of a *great purpose*.

"Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." This is an *interruptive voice*.

Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must suffer, and be killed, and rise again. His eye saw through the whole process; it penetrated the sevenfold midnight of horror, and kindled upon the immortal glory beyond. This I regard as a *profound* view of human history.

In contrast to this, hear what Peter says:—"Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Peter's eye could not pierce the darkness; his vision was destroyed by the overpowering gloom; no star of hope darted a ray of promise through the awful midnight. This I regard as a *superficial* view of human history.

Christ's answer shows that it was more, and worse than superficial:—"Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me." How much meaning there is in this withering rebuke we shall not see until we place it in contrast with the blessing which Christ pronounced upon this same man a very short time before. Christ had proposed the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter instantly replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thereupon Christ uttered this benediction:—"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,

but my Father which is in heaven." If you want to see a contrast you should put the 17th verse and the 23rd verse into juxta-position :—

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona."

"Get thee behind me, Satan."

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee."

"Thou savourest the things that be of men."

In both cases Christ is the speaker, and in both cases He is speaking about the same man. See how two-sided is man while on the earth ! A side that is sunned by the unclouded glory of the heavens ; a side that droops and darkens towards the alluring earth. Man has his moments of rapt ecstasy—his times of clear revelation from the Father ; and anon he has times of blindness, times of perplexity, times of stumbling, and blundering, and falling.

By grouping these introductory points, we shall see that the subject may assume some such form as this :—

Great purposes and interruptive voices ; or the profound and the superficial in human history.

Christ and Peter shall set before us the broadest contrasts in human development. Beginning with Christ, I affirm,—

I. THE MAJESTY OF A PURPOSE IMPARTS TO ITS POSSESSOR TRANQUILLITY IN ANTICIPATION OF THE SEVEREST TRIALS.

As Jesus Christ uttered this "must go," He was the embodiment of the greatest purpose that ever held dominion in the human mind. His purpose was to give incarnation to the counsels of eternity—to pour out the blood of a redeeming sacrifice—to exalt the government of God, and make possible the salvation of man.

With such a purpose burning in Him, how could He be other than calm? Such a purpose lay deeper than the range of the disturbing forces that agitate and confound superficial minds. Great purposes make a man constant, steady, majestic. When the "must go" of his convictions embraces his whole nature, he is firm as a planet—irresistible as the sea! It has appeared to me, that the absence of an adequate purpose in human life may account for two things: for example, it may account for *all hesitancy and fear in moral enterprise*. Let a man's soul be filled with a design,—let his faith burn into enthusiasm,—let his idea become the necessity of his life and the very synonym of his name,—and will he fear? will he hesitate? will he furl his banner before the threatening foe? Let the history of heroism testify! What are the constituent elements of heroism? I answer, *A great purpose, and great faith in it*. Given the purpose and the faith, and you have strength, and patience, and hope, and surest victory. The time of your full revelation may be long in

revolving. When the church is filled with an adequate purpose, the church will hesitate no longer about her redeeming mission ; she will pour confusion into the breast of her adversaries, and her very look will strike off their chariot wheels.

The absence of a great purpose accounts also for *the terrors of anticipated death in many cases*. The Apostle speaks of men who all their lifetime have been subject to bondage through fear of death. Such bondsmen have not a true idea of life ; their vision of the future is beclouded ; they cannot understand that, though the root is in the grave, the flower is blooming in the skies. They forget that the cemetery is but a morsel of dust in the hand of God, and that death is but a vizored angel ! Give such men a purpose worth living for ; set them to the building of a temple that shall reach even unto heaven ; give them balances that shall weigh correctly the dust of earth ; give them to feel that Jesus has conquered death, and that He is in them to repeat the victorious process, and they will kiss the slayer's sword ; they will get honey from the lion's bones, and meat out of the eater's mouth.

Look at Jesus. Never was sunset so calm as was that marred countenance,—a countenance rich with lines of grief, richer with prophecies of joy ! Jesus tarries, as it were, over the process through which He was about to pass. He pronounces each



sorrow with lingering deliberation. There is no indecorous haste. There is none of the tumultuous plunging of impatience. The man of sorrows is the man of strength. I, too, would face my destiny with equal moral majesty. I, too, would look forward to Jerusalem, to riving thorns, and piercing nails, with the same serenity, the same unruffled calm. How may this be? Only by having the same purpose, the same self-sacrifice, the same deep trust in God.

We now advance to Peter, and he gives us a point of sharp contrast.

II. SUPERFICIAL NATURES CANNOT INTERPRET  
THE MAJESTY OF A GREAT PURPOSE.

"Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." In thus replying to Jesus, Peter was quite as sincere and kind as when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There was a woman's pathos in his trembling tone. All his sensibilities revolted as he heard that Jesus was voluntarily going up to Jerusalem to lay down His life. Peter spoke according to his mental and moral nature at the moment. This deliverance came straight from the heart of the man. But it was superficial. Peter did not know the mystery of death being the servant of life; he knew not how from the putrid seed could come the beautiful flower or golden

harvest; and therefore with impatient affection, he sought to interpose between the Saviour and a cruel death. Not only was Peter superficial, but you might have been long in his society without discovering the fact. You cannot truly know any man until a grand crisis shall supervene. Crises reveal character. You will best know who your friends are when you are most in need of them. Many a man will shake you by the hand in the secluded lane, who would avoid you in the thronged promenade or the public hall. You will know what a man's courage is when he is brought face to face with the hungering and thirsting tiger, better than you can know it while he is seated by the fire of his home, and surrounded by the comforts of his family. Great questions lay men open from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet. Men are not to be tried before little tribunals. Bring each man up to the touchstone of a great question if you would test the reality, the dignity, and the value of his character.

If you would persuade yourselves of the inability of superficial natures to comprehend and interpret the majesty of a great purpose, turn up the history of the world, and see *how great ideas have had to struggle for existence*. Did ever a great idea realize its "must go" without having to encounter interruptive Peters? Little ideas, respectable enterprises, decent actions, have passed along the world's

highway without much incommodation ; but the ideas that have given love to the heart, and direction to the understanding of an age or an empire, have had to fight their way to Jerusalem step by step. The world would block up the way of its noblest benefactors. The world often shuts the door in the face of its best friends. The superficialists would have victory without death, but the wise know that in the deep tomb they must lay the foundations of the imperishable temple.

Chief among the interruptions—more or less, indeed, the source of them all—has been the inborn selfishness of the human heart. Need I rehearse the dreary monologue of selfishness? Selfishness says, “I know there are many evils in the Church, and many evils in the State, but why should *I* be foremost to point them out, and the loudest in demanding their extermination? I should have no objection to be one of a number; I should not care much to have my name put down in a large list of committee men, but why should I expose myself alone to the concentric fire of the ramparts of evil?” This is the careful talk of selfishness. This, the humane piety of personal indulgence; this, the sublime heroism that is never found alone on the mountains of speculation or the billows of enterprise. Let any man arise in our midst and declare himself ready to undergo

protracted and severe suffering for the sake of a purpose that is dear to him ; let him announce a programme magnanimously comprehensive and self-ignoring, and he will find Peters enough to denominate him a fanatic, and interrupt his journey to the cross. History never tells of a hero without telling of a Peter starting to his side. What form this Peter may assume it is impossible to foretell ; but in husband, or wife, or child, or business, or social circumstances, there will ever be found some formidable impediment, *some final test of strength*. I may now be addressing your own experience. There is a man, for example, who in early life was the subject of renewing grace. In the sunny morning of his new being he was ready for any service in the sanctuary. He implored his rejoicing pastor to turn him to any account,—to make of him a missionary at home or a missionary abroad, —“*anything*,” he generously exclaimed, “only do make use of me.” So much for morning bloom, and hope, and joy. Speedily a Peter came upon him and said—of course quite in the tone of a friend,—“This be far from thee : you are hardly fit to judge of yourself yet ; wait a little ; you had better go into business and earn a fortune, for you know you may do extensive good as a layman as well as a missionary ;” and the weak young man, not having moral force enough to call the tempter by his right name, “Satan,” and drive

him into his native pit, meekly succumbs, humbly subsides into commonplace, and is never heard of at Jerusalem !

The controversy thus comes to one of two results : either Christ overcomes Peter, or Peter overcomes Christ. Every man must, sooner or later, submit to some test of his strength. In each history there must be a crisis. The victory cannot lie in two opposite directions. If you do not instantly command Satan out of your sight by telling him to get behind you, he will overturn your purposes, and bind you as his perpetual slave. There should be no parleying. Christ does not ask Peter to state any reasons ; the question is taken entirely out of the range of debate, and, with a decision that would not tolerate trifling, Satan was ordered to escape from the Conqueror's path. Let the example of the Master be the rule of the servant.

### III. GREAT PURPOSES ARE NECESSARILY ASSOCIATED WITH SELF-SACRIFICE.

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." I cannot but suggest that violence is often done to this passage by regarding these words in the 24th verse as the opening of a new subject. I prefer to regard them as the continuation of the Saviour's discourse respecting what was awaiting Him at Jerusalem. Thus, the 21st verse and the 24th

might be read without any break, and the sense would be this:—

“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must *go*” . . .  
“then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will COME.”

Jesus has been speaking about a journey; the whole structure of the passage is based upon the idea of travelling to a given point, and for this reason I regard the encounter with Peter as a parenthesis; Peter broke in upon the Master's discourse — interrupted its flow; and having dismissed Peter, Christ resumes, saying,

“I *go*”

“if any man will *come*.”

Looked at in this light the circumstance suggests two ideas:—

First. *Whoso follows a great leader must expect great sacrifices.* In this instance the leader was Christ, and Christ is never found on any part of His journey without having some point of sacrifice immediately or remotely in view. He is never found advancing to what the superficial observer would term *joy*: all Christ's joys lay beyond this scene; they gleamed from behind the clouds of mortality; they lay on the thither side of the cross. This fact explains the injunction of the text. With most transparent candour, Christ tells His followers what to expect. Before they take

their first step, He assures them that companionship with Himself means suffering, sacrifice, death, resurrection, and immortality! What is true in the lowest sphere is true in the highest. The great leader is ever marked by indomitable courage, and courage leads men up to many a tiger's lair, and compels them across many a stormy sea. Timidity walks along the well-tramped highway of custom, knows all the sheltering places, is well acquainted with the signs of the sky, and can cheat the cloud that is laden with tempestuous storms. Courage, on the other hand, goes forth with the imperial men of high enterprise, and all who follow in the track must prepare themselves for fierce assault, and sudden lightning, and vengeful deluge. Take this as a principle,—*Follow the great, means bring your cross with you!*

The second idea suggested by this counsel is,—

*That the spirit and example of a great moral leader must ever be reproduced.* Conceive the representation you would have, were Christ's idea fully realized. Genius might laurel her brows from the tree of immortality, could she successfully transfer to canvas the divine ideal. Standing forth in noblest majesty is Jesus himself, bearing such cross as mortal man could never bear. His face, marked by high resolution, is set towards Jerusalem. Behind Him are all the generations of His followers, their figures, as is meet, fading off into

dim perspective, as if unworthy to be seen in fellowship so illustrious, because so divine; each, like the Master, carrying the symbol of sacrifice—each laden with a cross intended not for others, but for himself—all marching toward holy and immortal Calvary, there to die the death that means victory—to offer the sacrifice which means coronation! Here, then, is an easy test of our moral position. Have we a cross? Is ours the spirit of sacrifice? Does our path lead up a heavy steep, and does it terminate at Golgotha? These are the questions which determine manhood! There is no appeal from this standard. Let the heart be heard in the presence of these inquiries!

With these ideas well wrought into our nature, we cannot easily forget that great purposes are necessarily associated with great sacrifices. The young traveller should know this well. I would not that any young man should be turned out into the storm without much godly counsel: let him know what is on the outside; let him know exactly what to expect; let him write out on his life-flag, in letters that cannot be obliterated, this truth,—*For great purposes I must pay great prices.*

#### IV. GREAT PURPOSES ALWAYS CORRECTLY ESTIMATE THE VALUE OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS.

I prefer to take this point first, in order to throw the succeeding lesson into fuller contrast, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole



world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Persisting in the idea that the whole of the words refer to one subject, we shall require another explanation of the word "soul" than is commonly suggested. What, then, does the word "soul" signify in this connection? I answer, suggestively, not dogmatically, that its equivalent is *great purposes*, or *dominating convictions*, or *supreme plan of life*. Regarded in this acceptation the inquiry might thus be paraphrased:—

Simon Peter has heard my resolution—he is staggered by the announcement of my plan—he seeks to interrupt me in my course to sacrifice and resurrection—he would have me turn round and seek such comfort as the world may yield,—but now I ask him one question—I make one demand of him, answer me *this*. What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world of ease, and indulgence, and leisure, and luxury, if by so doing he must exterminate his holiest purposes, stifle his tenderest and deepest yearnings, and tear up the very foundations of his manhood? It looks easy and simple for me to take Peter's superficial view of life, but he little knows that the man who hushes the divine voice within him actually loses the very world he expected to gain, rots into incurable corruption, and that the heavens bar him out as a culprit and a fool!

What the world has to give must be valued at a proper price. The cardinal who served his king better than he served his God, was cast off in his old age. So must it ever be. Only God can carry a man clear through everything, and crown him on yonder shore. Now and again you may have realized, if but for a moment, the insignificance of the world, by reason of the superiority of the soul. You may have been translated to the Pisgah-height of some great purpose, or some heavenly ecstasy, and thence the world faded off into a sprinkling of dust. It may have been in the sacred temple of the sick-room that you have been so translated. You have seen the young die in the full bloom of summer, or the aged in the yellow ripeness of autumn; you have heard them speak of sin and Christ, of holy vow and immortal hope, of a standing Saviour and waiting angels; and as they have sung sweet hymns of trust in the very act of dying, your soul has caught fire, and in ecstasy of devotion you have exclaimed, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is well to have such moments here and there in the troubled hours of life. They open up the future as with a telescope, and condense the present into the small magnitude of its merits. You know what vows you registered in that holy temple! How great was to be your life, how profound your reverence, how childlike your trust, how fragrant

your piety! You said to yourself, nor did you keep it from your friends, that you "*must go* unto Jerusalem," and angels thrilled with a new joy as they caught the words of your plighted love: it now only remains to be asked, *Did* you "go unto Jerusalem," or did some interruptive voice break up your plan? Say!

If your answer is, "I went," I joy with you; but if "I went *not*," you must know,—

V. THAT SUPERFICIAL NATURES ALWAYS PROCEED ON A SELF-DEFEATING POLICY.

Christ's testimony is clear,—“For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.” I am not aware that history affords a more forcible illustration of this paradox than the case of Lot. From the battle of the herdmen it became necessary that Abram and Lot should part. Surrendering the right of seniority, Abram called upon Lot to make choice. “And Lot lifted up his eyes”—eyes cold as steel, eyes in which poetry never gleamed, eyes in which the stars never looked for their own reflection, eyes that could see the land but not the landscape,—“and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere.” . . . . “Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan.” So far all is gain. What could be better? Fine soil, noble streams, genial atmosphere, what more did joy want to make her lap quite full? Lot was

not one of your pietetic men, who had any questions to ask about religious accommodation, or religious privileges, or religious society: not he! he wanted streams, acres, crops, herds; and having them, what room had he left for God? The superficial world might pity poor Abram, as he meekly moved off into the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron. In relating the incident respecting the separation of Abram and Lot, the historian appends a religious note, after setting forth the choice of each. Having told what Lot did, the narrator adds, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly;" and having told how Abram betook himself, adds, "and built an altar there unto the Lord." On these two points the whole case is pivoted. Soon after, the heavens rained fire on Lot's dwelling-place, and the sharp man who asked no religious questions is seen dashing across his own farm to escape the flames, and he who thought he had saved his life, lost it, and in his drunken old age became the father of Moab and Ammon! Truly, he that saveth his life on superficial principles is attaching the millstone to his neck, and preparing to go down in the flood that never gives up its dead.

There are two men; each has a handful of grain. They shall teach us the meaning of this paradox. One of them says, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" (a proverb that has nipped many

a noble venture in the bud; and proceeding upon this basis, he refuses to part with his grain. In the *hand*! In the *hand*! that is his safe creed! The other, wishing to be a co-worker with God, to link himself on to the laws which keep the universe in motion, digs a grave and casts in the grain, and then he has nothing in *hand*! See how the proverbist grins his satisfaction and shakes with joy as he muses on his own skill in economics! By-and-bye God takes hold of the sower's hand and works with him: God sends down angels of light, and dew, and air, and disimprisons the seed: now there rises the tender blade, and anon comes the golden ear, and farther on the venturous sower has something in *both* hands! Bravely he says, All this shall go back again to the earth; and again and again the produce goes back, until the handful of corn shakes like Lebanon! And what of the man who "saved" his grain? The very eagerness and fervour of his grasp have caused it to *rot*, and he who blessed his sagacity is left to bemoan himself a fool! Learn, then, ye who are laying the basis of life, to operate on a broad and immoveable foundation. Have faith in God. Be nobly adventurous. Dare to go out of the narrow circumference of sight, into the infinite of faith. Take hold of the offered hand of God, and step into the veiled land of the unknown. God has no orphans. There is not an unwatched lamp in the firmament;

there is not an untended flower in the mead ; there is not a forgotten saint in all the multitude beyond man's numbering ! Let us do great things for Christ. We can never do enough ! Men may think we are "losing" life, while we are in the very act of "saving" it. Give Jesus everything,—intellect, heart, life ! Go with Him to Jerusalem, and having accompanied Him to the scene of humiliation, He will clothe you with an ephod whiter than snow, and crown you with a diadem above the brightness of the sun.

POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE.

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“Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”—**2 PETER** i. 15.

THE voice is the voice of a veteran. There is none of the silver of youthful music in it. It is round, rich, ripe, mellow: the very tones seem to have upon them the russet of advanced autumn. There is history in this voice. Gone years, with their manifold and affluent experiences, their struggles against Satanic force, and their triumphs through Divine strength, repeat themselves in this rugged and penetrating eloquence. In this respect, then, ours is a high privilege. The young man, in the passion incident to inexperience, says, not without a dash of irreverence and flippancy, that he can soon run up the gamut of an old man's sober strain. Not so with the veteran before us. Some persons are born old; they are withered, and desiccated, and ungainly from the womb. Others are ever young; winter snows their head, but sends no breath of frost to their warm blood; they go back again to their Creator beautiful in renewed youth, strong in immortal power. Such a man was the

writer of this text. His heart throbbed like a hero's, the fire of inextinguishable enthusiasm in his eye. Bravely, with a conqueror's port, he says, "I will *endeavour*." That word "*endeavour*" charms and inspires me. It is beautiful in humility; it is majestic in strength. It combines calmness and resolution. It is a child's word and yet a king's. The old man is not content with what he *has* done: valorously he says he will try to do *more*. There is none of the canting indolence too often incident to old age; there is no moan, no wail, no sigh. Though between him and his death there is only a "shortly" as "the Lord Jesus hath showed" him, yet he says, "I will endeavour—I will contrive—I will put both hands out—nothing shall be wanting on my part—I will work down to the very last moment of my life, that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

Such are the circumstances; what is the subject? The subject is post-mortem power,—posthumous influence,—man conquering death,—mind ruling with monarchic majesty when the poor flesh is rotting in a forgotten grave.

1. In calling attention to this multitudinous theme, multitudinous in its principles and applications, I have to affirm, first of all, that a sublime influence after death is the result of a sublimely



conducted life. That statement is surely not wanting in simplicity. The earnest "endeavour" is the cause of the effective "remembrance." Many covet the influence who are impatient of the long and disciplinary "endeavour." The two must forever be united. Can the pauper bequeath large estates to posterity? Can the man whose brain has been permitted to lie like an uncultivated waste, rule the thinking, or mould the course of generations yet to be born? You have no answer but a scornful *No*, and your answer is right: learn, then, that the interpretation of after-death influence is to be found in the range and tone of the all-destining life.

A brief inquiry into the context will show us certain prominent features in the Apostle's character; and by so much will aid our comprehension of his purpose. What "things," then, are they which the Apostle is anxious to enshrine in eternal memory? Were they the dreams of a distempered fancy?—the transient experiences of his dying conflict? If you cast your eye over this chapter, you will observe how frequently the Apostle employs the words "*these things*:" for example, in ver. 8, he says, "For if *these things* be in you;" in ver. 9, "But he that lacketh *these things* is blind;" ver. 10, "For if ye do *these things*, ye shall never fail;" ver. 12, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of *these things*;"

and finally in the text, "That ye may have *these things* always in remembrance." Of what "things" does the fervent and heroic writer testify? In the beginning of his letter the Apostle intimates that the great end of the redemptive economy is to make us "*partakers of the divine nature*;" every believer is to have in him all of God that his capacity can contain. God in his intellect, presiding over all the evolutions of his mental life; God in his heart, directing all the issues of his moral being; God in his conduct, sanctifying all his social relations. That is the sovereign object for which, through "divine power," we are "called to glory and virtue." The work of sanctification must go on until the saint can say, "I and my Father are one." That is the sublime end of christianity. It is not to multiply the technicalities of theology; it is not to build one church spire higher than another; it is not to furnish a grindstone on which pugnacious bigots may whet their little swords for internecine combat: it is to gather up a shattered and overthrown humanity—to reburnish the living stones on which the fire of an enemy has left traces of fury—to rebuild the blasted empire of manhood, until it shall be beautiful and holy as a palace built for God.

The Apostle having begun here, proceeds to show that "diligence" is necessary to the full working out of the christian life. He uses a word

that cannot easily be forgotten. He says that our simple duty is to ADD! Can we forget *that*? The ripest scholar amongst us is not beyond that "add:" we are to add the graces one to another until "charity" glitters above them all as a crowning star. "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness *charity*:" there is no higher height in heaven—it towers into the very heart of God. After this injunction there comes a remark full of significance. I specially call the eye of young men to this ninth verse, "He that lacketh these things is *blind*, and cannot see afar off." This is an interpretation of *blindness* which is often overlooked. *All bad men are blind.* The true vision is *moral*. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see—" "see" what? "See" all great visions in one—"they shall see *God*." Call him blind who can see only with his physical eyes. Love knoweth the deepest interpretations. The clear eye of purity can read off the writing on the world's wall, when the bloodshot eye of the blaspheming bacchanal can see but enough to make his bones shake with avenging agony. Grace is genius. There is a graceless, godless, atheistic thing called genius, but I call it insanity; the light in its eye is not the light of heaven, but the flare of an unholy and

unconsecrated "fire. God hath "hidden" certain things from the "wise and prudent," and "revealed them unto babes;" He has left the "wise" shivering outside the guardian wall, and taken the "babes" with Him to behold the growths of the paradise that never can be lost.

The Apostle, having given this view of the christian life, turns to his personal experience. All old men like to talk about themselves. They are their own library. Their recollections, like the sea-shells, have in them the boom of the ocean, and in that solemn boom they hear messages from the venerable past. Let the old man talk. His tones fascinate himself at least, and he has the right to the harmless entrancement. Peter says, "I will not be negligent;" "I will stir you up;" "I will endeavour." His eye brightens, and in his voice there is a quiver of emotion; he sees the heavenly port; he feels that he is breaking up fellowship with this tabernacle; he descries the glory-crowned Beulah; he hears the play of the wave as it breaks on the sinless shore; and then speaks with rapture of "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

I have thus reverted to the context because it gives us a revelation of the life which the Apostle had been living, and which he intended to conclude upon earth by an "endeavour" to perpetuate its principles through all time. The Apostle has re-

vealed the root-forces of his being. He has shown us the sources of his vitality, and given to us the secret of his sovereignty over all-dethroning death. The lesson is clear, that he who would be useful to posterity must be useful to his contemporaries. He who would conquer death and be a minister of God to all coming generations, must live the symmetrical and comprehensive life here sketched by the Apostle's dying hand. Sublime life and sublime influence are cause and effect. If we are careful about the life, the influence need not excite our anxiety. It is ours to plant, and ours to water, and the increase in this, as in everything else, is with God. Do we not often limit the application of that passage? Do we not lock it up in the church, and confine it to moral service alone? Why, sirs, it is as true in intellectual cultivation as it is in preaching the gospel. It is as true in the farmer's field as in the preacher's pulpit. The finite never can do more than plant and water; and *all* increase—the increase of flower, or forest, or thought, or virtue—is necessarily with the Infinite. Let us do “these things,” and our influence shall be immortal.

History, however, compels us to turn aside, and offer an explanation. When it is affirmed that sublime life and sublime influence are cause and effect, it should be added that the influence is occasionally of tardy growth. Sometimes a man cannot be read by his own age. The prophet lives in the

future. He cannot be comprehended by the sooth-sayers, the magicians, and the monthly prognosticators. Some will say that he is Elias, and others one of the old prophets. All kinds of speculation will be suggested. As in an oil painting, those who come too near will see nothing but thick flakes of paint. But his day will surely come. The darkness may be long in comprehending the light, but the light will certainly prevail. The wise word may be long in winning a fit audience, but its hope is in the ages. The profound book may remain sealed, but some of the kindred of the Lion of the tribe of Judah will arise and open the volume, and interpret it to a wondering and admiring world. Persevere! Quit you like men! Say again and again, with a hero's hope, "I will endeavour," and verily you shall take your sacred place among—

"The dead but sceptred monarchs, who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns."

2. The fact that life is the cause of influence, that life is attended with results that are imperishable, greatly enhances the dignity and responsibility of living. "No man liveth unto himself." A man's audience, as has just been hinted, may be small to-day, but if he has a *living* word to utter, his congregation will increase with the ages. Is MILTON dead? Is BUNYAN clean gone for ever? Is PASCAL's memory like a vanished star? Milton never sang

to so large an assembly as he sings to to-day. Bunyan is, so to speak, more alive to-day than when he dreamed the world's happiest dream; he had life *then*, but he has "life more abundantly" now. The true man does not work for one generation alone. Every true thought is a globe of light, which shall never cease to shine in the world's brightening firmament. Passing all computation is the reward of the monarch-thinker or the illustrious servant. His compensation is an ever-recurring circle; literally, it never ceases; the cup of water always comes back smiled into wine; God has never done piling crowns upon the head of the faithful.

Still we are to take the element of *time* into consideration. God does not measure by our chronometers. This is incidentally and beautifully brought out by our Lord in conversation with His brethren, when they wished Him to go up to the feast of tabernacles. They were ambitious, impatient, unbelieving men. A man is often impeded and misunderstood even by his own kinsfolk. So it was with Jesus on the occasion referred to. They urged Him to go into Judea, to get nearer and nearer the great metropolitan centre, and to display His mighty works on the widest platform. This impatience elicited from Jesus a most profound and instructive reply. It was a reply terribly severe too. He uttered it without fury of tone, but it might have consumed the most brazen cheek. It is wonderful

how terrible a thing may be said in a whisper. When those brethren were all pressing Him with petulant importunity to take a bolder position in society, He made this quiet but most blenching reply, "My time is not yet come, but your time is alway ready." The fungus grows and perishes within the compass of a few hours, but the oak is the growth of centuries. The great truth set forth in Christ's reply seems to be, that in proportion to the width and volume and weight of character, and in proportion to the pomp and splendour of destiny, is the time required for a man's full unfoldment and consolidation. The *rocket* splutters out all its empty secrets at once; the *stars* have not told all their story yet. We must not measure all men by the same rule. One man comes to his full estate in a single day, as it were; another must do cures to-day and to-morrow, and not until the third day is he perfected.

I have spoken of the reward of the monarch-thinker and illustrious servant; let me add, that what is true in the loftier realms of thought is also true in the humbler spheres of service. The law of the oak is the law of the daisy. All character leaves more or less of influence behind it. Is that child of yours dead, that years ago, with a bursting heart, you laid under the sod? As long as you carry her fair face in your eye's picture-book—as long as her charming prattle is memoried in your faithful ear—as long as you thrill under a well-remembered touch



of her soft little hand—so long the child is not dead, but sleepeth. Is your companion dead with whom you were wont to take sweet counsel? You hid no secrets from each other. In the newborn light and in the deepening shade you walked together, talked together, exchanged speculations and compared experiences. The one was the complement of the other. And now that you know him no longer after the flesh, is he therefore dead? Verily no. So thoroughly were you one in all your higher instincts and aspirations, that even now you feel as though you could consult him; even now he—

“Comes to your side in the twilight dim,  
When the spirit’s eye only sees.”

Even now, with mystic mien and hallowing voice, he takes part in the counsels of your life.

It has just been affirmed that posthumous influence invests life with enhanced dignity. While Bunyan lived he was but as a mustard seed; now he is a great cathedral tree, in which ten thousand voices are lifted up in laudatory and grateful song! “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.” No living man is complete. While your heart throbs you are undergoing a process. Time will mellow you; age will tone your character. Do not urge society to give you a verdict just now. Society is too heated and confused to pronounce upon you with the accuracy of deliber-

ation, and the dignity of repose. Death will befriend you. A most solemn and righteous estimation of character is often introduced by death. The green hillock in the yard of the dead is a judgment-seat which might well appal an unjust judge. Your appeal then, under all misapprehension and misrepresentation, must be to the new hours which Time has yet to strike from her bell, and which shall chime out many a reversal of condemnation, and many a fulfilment of expectation long deferred. We who believe that the wheel of retribution never pauses, that death does but give us new aspects of life, that there is a higher empire than the flesh, that the absolute and final adjudication is yet to supervene, should carry ourselves with the patience, the calmness, the dignity of men who cannot die! To-day is not the measure of my brief eternity; there is a to-morrow coming, coming from the heart of God, coming from the clime of light, coming with justice in its hand, and mercy on its lip; and to that better day I must commit my cause. The good can afford to be patient. The true can wait until the battering shower is over. The storm can extinguish man's rushlights, but the orbs of God burn on far beyond the storm's dark wing.

I spoke of responsibility as well as dignity, arising from the fact that influence survives our personal presence in society. Opinions have come

down to us from the earliest ages, and are to-day ranked among the most influential of national or social forces. Take the one case of the family. The old man quotes what his venerated mother said when he was quite a child, and the mother's word is to him more powerful than all the statutes of learned parliaments. You have seen a man's face break into smiles when he called up words which moulded and directed his infancy. The voice that uttered them is employed in other spheres, far off in the higher light that we have come to know by the sweet name of heaven ; but the thoughts which they embody are comforting angels, that will tarry with us till the dark horizon blushes with the purple of eternal day.

The point to be remembered is this :—*our personal absence does not terminate our influence upon earth.* We are setting in motion a train of influences that shall outrun the wheels of the worlds, and be but commencing when those wheels take fire and cease their revolutions for ever. Tremendous is the responsibility of those who have to operate upon unformed and unsettled mind ! The writing which you parents write can never be obliterated. Even circumstances to which you attach little or no importance haunt the memory. The frown, the smile, the gentle word, the harsh rebuff, are not to be forgotten ! A terrible thing it is to live ! Sirs, *dying* is nothing !

*Beasts* die. *Living* is everything! On every side the invisible is pressing upon us. The lifting of a hand sends a shudder to the stars! The falling of a tear is heard in the depths of the infinite! We little know how sensitive is the universe. Wherever I put the tip of my finger I touch the hem of the King's garment. The very stones need but a word from heaven to cause them to stand up as children of Abraham. What, then, shall be said of the *moral* universe? Experiences, ideas, emotions, run on from age to age, and thus *to-day* bears the uncounted riches of all expired time. To live once is to live for ever. The feeblest pulse in the obscurest circle flutters and thrills on in its influences when faded worlds expire, and shattered empires go down in death.

3. Every man who is in vital sympathy with Jesus Christ rejoices in the consciousness that he is working for posterity. Here and there, on life's thronged highway, we have seen little tattered banners set up, bearing this inscription: "I must take care of myself, and posterity may do as well as it can." This has the semblance of a profoundly wise economy. It is declared to be a fine specimen of the development of individuality. Let fire fall on it! Let the angry earth rend and swallow it up! Let it swiftly fall into the pit! My answer is ready for every man who will stand up and openly declare that his christianity has never led

him to make any humble or sublime "endeavour" on behalf of others. If any man will say, after having bowed his knee at Bethlehem, and studied the mystery of the bloody sweltering in Gethsemane, and interpreted the signification of Calvary's dread work, that his heart is driven in upon itself, without any yearning of affection towards others—even towards the unborn—my answer is at hand: standing before God's altar, feeling upon me mightily the power of a divine consecration, marking the precious blood which flowed for the world's guilt, a guilt beyond the world's comprehending, standing there not as an irate priest, but as an outraged man; in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I excommunicate the wretch!

I claim the world-embracing benevolence of christianity as one of the clearest and strongest defences of its divinity. Its benediction would fall on all human kind. Meet it where you will, its watchword is, "Good news for every man!" The darkness cannot deter it: the storm cannot quench its zeal: devils cannot bind its pinions of light! It will sing everywhere; sing to kings glittering in the spangles of a momentary royalty; sing to the lone wanderer who has no one to fling a smile on his weary way. It knows nothing of our geographical boundaries. Monarchs have gratified themselves by painting the globe-map in

divers colours, and driving in stakes to mark the boundaries of their empire ; of all this christianity knows nothing—her appeal is to man on every shore, on every mountain, on every plain. All who know it vitally, partake of this all-inclusive benevolence. When they hear the commanding word, “Go ye into all the world,” they feel that less than this would be less than divine !

Will those moral lunatics who are so selfishly devoted to their own immediate interests reflect how much they themselves were indebted to their forerunners ? Do they sufficiently consider that they themselves were *not born into an unfurnished house* ? Who built the temples, fabricated the machinery, patronized the discoveries, wrote the literature which make up the world’s great bulk ? How came we into possession of riches so vast, so golden ? Who opened the thousand fountains, whose living waters turn the very desert into a fruitful field ? How such things tell of ancestry ! how they bind us to the past ! how they multiply our obligations ! It clearly comes to this, that every man of us is *born deeply in debt*. Have we paid the poets that have sung to us ? Have we paid the mechanicians who have shown us that knowledge is power ? Have we paid the mariners who have found out a highway over the billows ? Have we paid the authors who have turned our solitude into society ? Every one of us is deeply in debt. The

Past is our patient and gracious creditor, and our obligations are overwhelming.

The argument which I wish to build upon the fact is this,—that as we cannot pay the mighty men who have covered the past with immortal renown, and who have laid us deeply in debt to their genius, their piety, their benevolence, we can only show our gratitude by noble “endeavours” to imitate their example. Our thunders of applause are nothing to those whose bodies moulder in the chambers of the dead, and whose spirits worship in the upper light. We may stamp with tremendous approbation upon their graves, but the ear has done with hearing; we may roar our acclaims into the firmament, but heaven opens not to let the unavailing thunder pass. No! let us serve the living, and through them the coming ages. We may all do this. Some can throw open kingdoms of thought, others can carry the prophet’s mantle; some can head the advancing army, others can lift up the wounded and weary. Blessed is that servant who is found waiting! We do not work alone. Down through the roaring and pitiless tempest comes this word of strength,—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Into the dark cave into which despair has sometimes driven us comes the same word of power. If we falter for a moment, it is that we may spring forward with increased energy the next. We are not to see the results of all that we do. It is enough

that no true word can return void to the speaker. Utter the Lord's cry to the sons of men ; put in the roots ; scatter the seed ; do all things written in the divine law of human life ; and one day the eternal summer shall set in, and all memories shall be absorbed in the one recollection that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.



## USEFULNESS.

“ And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.”—MATT. xxi. 19.

It has been customary to allege that this event presents a marked exception to the usual course of Christ's life. Every other display of His power has been immediately and obviously associated with the highest interests of humanity. Christ employed the miracle, so to speak, as a chariot of fire in which He rode forth to accomplish a mission of benevolence. Christ never used His power merely for the sake of using it. Power was an instrument, not an end. It was displayed rather in the service of man than in attestation of His own personal Godhead. The quieted sea, the rent grave, the loosened tongue, the unsealed eyelid, all show that when Christ put forth His power it was to ameliorate, to redeem, to save mankind. Yet here is an apparent exception to His beneficent course. A fig tree is blasted by the lightning of His disappointed eye. That fig tree is transformed into a melancholy exception to all the surrounding vegetation. Spring is forbidden

to awaken that branded root from its sleep of death; winter is to sit on its desolated branches all through the shining, singing summer, and for ever it is to be spoken of as the tree that disappointed the hungering Messiah !

We shall see how little we are fitted to determine what are really exceptions in a great life. We are not yet equal to the straightforward, unstumbling reading of this profoundest human history. We stand aghast before the scathed tree, and as the withered leaves crunch under our feet, we ignorantly exclaim, "This is an exception ; this is not in harmony with the gentleness of Jesus ; this must have been a mischievous prank of the demon-gods that loathe all beauty ; this hideous patch does not suit the prevailing pattern of the Saviour's life ; it is the interpolation of an enemy." This is how man talks when the reading is not all straightforward ; when the ink is not all one colour ; when the type is not all one size. What can we possibly know of what are essentially exceptions in a life so profound, so many-sided, so mysterious, so divine as Christ's ? It is but a word here and there that we can bring within the circle of our twilight intelligence ; and yet, as though we could read the stars, we hand in a blurred and self-stultifying bill of exceptions to that wondrous life. Can the less contain the greater ? Can the primrose, a plaything of the joyous summer, interpret all the voices that ring

out from the oak ? or can it read the storied struggles with the storm that are treasured in the gnarls of that king of trees ? What can the butterfly tell of the landscape over which it flits for a moment ? What can to-day hold of the ages that have built the history of creation ? We mistake the seeming for the reality. We think there is nothing in the epistle but the address which brought it to our door. My object is to show that this is no exception to the Saviour's life. This note is in tune with the whole melody. It may be a variation, indeed, but it rises out of the main current, and, after an expression strikingly peculiar to itself, rejoins the great line, and swells it into sublimer bursts !

This little story is a great symbol. It is set up in the ages as a warning for ever. The story itself is written in fire, but the moral is penned with the immortal ink of tears.

1. What can be more decisive, for example, than its method of conveying Christ's view of *uselessness* ? Christ is never found approving of uselessness ; but, contrariwise, altogether condemning and reprobating it. He shuts the door in the very face of sluggish virgins, and orders off into darkness the man who wrapped up his possibilities in a napkin. I ever find Him calling sloth wickedness, and declaring that the man who will not walk into heaven shall be thrown into hell.

Let us be clear about this matter of uselessness,

Apart from definitions and distinctions we shall flounder. Error in definition has set fire to nations, and roused idiot kings to arms ! Deadlier still has been its result in moral considerations ; it has flung brilliant minds off the pivotal centres, and sent them plunging through the darkness of despair. Let me suggest a definition of usefulness that may rid us of encumbering difficulties. That only is useful which fulfils the divine idea of its creation ; in other words, that only is useful which *is* what it was *meant* to be. I submit that all the issues of the case are more or less involved in this definition. You do not deem a watch useless because it will not give you your latitude and longitude at sea. You do not say that a rose is useless because you cannot cook it, and bring it to the test of your knife and fork. Everything must be judged by the idea it was intended to represent or fulfil. The purpose determines everything. A principle so simple as this, one would think could never be forgotten ; yet hardly a sun sets without seeing it disregarded or miserably perverted. Every man carries his own favourite idea of usefulness, and with that he makes short work of all the questions which engage human consideration. One of man's merriest pastimes is to determine the usefulness of his neighbours. It is no business of his to deal with varieties of temperament, to balance idiosyncrasies, and to interpret special purposes ; but with the fool's philosophy

that huddles into indiscriminate masses all orders and conditions of things, he settles business in the bulk, and under one lock keeps families, and even nations, in charge. I protest against this blind judgment. Read everything, I repeat, in the light of the purpose it was intended to subserve. The most influential newspaper would make a poor breastplate in the day of battle. A sermon, orthodox as a Pauline epistle, would make a singular Act of Parliament. The fleetest hound that ever sped across the mountains would present a very humble figure in attempting to soar with the eagle. You see, then, through such grotesque illustrations, how everything must be viewed with special reference to the purpose it was meant to realize; and how careful we should be in coming to conclusions respecting the usefulness of any man, any preacher, any author, any worker, or any object whatsoever.

Take the case in hand. This tree was meant to grow figs. It had a distinct and well-known object to realize. Its form might be faultless; its leaves might be abundant, healthy, and beautiful; but the ultimate purpose of the Creator was that it should grow figs, and whatever else it grew was not to be valued in the absence of the fruit. The fruit! The fruit alone was everything! Christ did not say, "This tree is an ornament to the fig-yard or the landscape, a shelter for the wandering bird, or a shade for the worn traveller." Not so. Christ

looked for figs. What is the great principle involved? Is it not clearly this, that *God seeks His own idea in every man?* In this fact we find the profoundest solemnity of human life. Every man is intended to subserve a special end in life; though part of a whole, he is a distinct part, and has a work to do with his own hand. "So, then, every one of us must give account of himself to God." As we look for figs on one tree, and grapes on another, and so on through all the fruits grown on earth, so God comes and searches every man, to know how far each has realized the peculiar intent of the Creator. The arithmetician is not expected to formulate poetry any more than the poet is expected to dream arithmetic. Every man in his own order, and God the judge of all. I like to dwell upon the reflection that each man, each family, each nation, has a peculiar and special function to fulfil. Otherwise, I should be confounded by the world's mile on mile of brushwood; I should not know what to make of the den-population of leviathan cities; but I remember that there is one true Judge, whose smile is heaven, whose frown is hell. He will show by-and-bye what the smallest as well as the greatest was meant for, and until then we must leave many a problem. It is not enough to be a man; the responsibilities of manhood must be discharged. The foot must do the foot's work, and leave the eye to look after its own business. A flower is useful,

though it does not grow fruit. Gladly I proclaim the usefulness of beauty. A flower has many a time opened the very heavens to my aching heart. It has spoken to me of purity, and simplicity, and frailty, and mortality, and dependence. Was it useless because it gave me neither corn nor wine? Truly not. It did its work, and no angel could do more. Christ did not blast this tree because no music issued from its branches; a thousand birds might have shaken it with music of unequalled sweetness, or a silence blank as the dumbness of the grave might have reigned there. This was not the question; that tree had a distinct end to realize; it did not realize it, and therefore premature and everlasting winter settled upon it, and thus it was made to the ages a warning against appearances without reality, against pretence without usefulness.

2. The story gives us not only Christ's view of uselessness in the abstract, but of uselessness under the most aggravated circumstances. You do not denounce a Hottentot for his barbarism. He has never heard the voice of civilization, has had no opportunity of ameliorating his condition; he answers faithfully to all the influences which have operated upon him. So far all is right. The response has been correct. God will judge him on his own ground. You would not be disappointed with a fig tree that did not bear fruit in the open climate of England. You would feel a kind of

pity for the expatriated plant. Even a leaf would be a joy to you; you would say, "The tree has done its best; a leaf is enough in this ungenial clime." But would you judge a Hottentot and an Englishman by the same standard? Would you be content that a fig plant on the slopes of Bethany or Bethphage should thrive no better than on the banks of an English river or on the sunniest side of an English hill? No, truly. Your standard of judgment changes with changing circumstances. You have one rule in barbarism and another in civilization. What would delight in England would disappoint on Olivet. Heighten the application of this principle, and you encompass the judicial government of God. In summing up the history of nations, God deals with them differently. There is one law of rectitude, but not one law of measurement, for all. "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment" than for those who trifled with a fuller civilization, or shut their eyes to the noon blaze of gospel light.

Recur to the case in hand. This fig tree had everything in its favour—it was at home, it was in the very land of figs, the sunshine and the air were exactly adapted to their growth; yet the tree failed. It might, so far as fruit was concerned, as well have been standing amid Siberian ice. Is not this vividly symbolical of many a nation, and many a family, and many a man? Look at the Jews.



They lived in close proximity to Heaven. They were like high mountains, which receive the first light of the sun and his last baptism of fire. They were God's peculiar people. Around them were the impregnable walls of divine defence; upon them were shed the splendours of special dignity; among them lived the prophets who cleft the ages, and the singers of hope that charmed the world out of its deepening despair; higher still, in their midst the redeeming God became incarnate. Yet that fig tree bore no fruit. Jerusalem was as a city of plagues; her princes within her were roaring lions; her judges were ravaging wolves; her prophets were light and treacherous persons; her priests polluted the sanctuary and did violence to the law. Here, then, is not mere uselessness, but uselessness under the most aggravated circumstances. The richest influences of heaven were thrown away upon the treacherous multitude, and they who should have borne the most abundant fruit were barren as the grave.

The field of practical application is immeasurable. The penetrating appeal comes swiftly and irresistibly to every one of us. Take a man who has had every advantage from his youth up. His infant hands were clasped in prayer by the fondest of mothers. Chief among the names he was taught to love was the name of Jesus. His every step in life has been watched and blessed by a

yearning solicitude he can little comprehend. In his widest wandering, the influences of parental intercession were round about him as golden bands. The warmest of summers has brooded over him; the gentlest and purest of breezes have breathed around him; the dew of the morning and the evening has lain thickly upon him; yet fruit there is none; leaves, plenty. He can never satisfy a hungry traveller; he never elicits the blessing of gratitude, but continually provokes the malediction of disappointment. He ought to have been a tree of blessing in his family. Hunger should have fed upon his abundant fruit; but the tree is a withered and blackened thing in the midst of a royal and golden summer.

So much have circumstances to do with the formation and employment of character, that I cannot but revert to the caution that we should not dogmatically pronounce upon one another's usefulness. Judging some of you from an external angle, I might conclude that your lives are useless, yet in methods unknown to me you may be most useful. A man is not to be deemed useless simply because we do not see how he works, or at what he aims. I have heard godly and earnest men denominate everybody useless who is not in the Sunday school; and others, intoxicated with the congou of an annual tea-drinking, describe their brethren as indolent because they do not fritter

away their time on half a dozen committees. Let me protest against this groundless and thoughtless crimination of one another. There are many shining Christians who are no more qualified to teach in a school than to navigate a squadron or command an army. There are men born to be public teachers ; they carry their certificate with them ; they are unsealed epistles, known and read of all men. Others are intended to do a work not so demonstrative, but not less profound or essential. Some work best under the stimulus of applauding throngs, and others best in the deep shade of secrecy. Honour to all ! Christ knows what He made us for, and according to His own idea He will conduct the final adjudication.

3. I say that *He* will conduct the final adjudication, and that leads me to the solemn yet animating fact that the examination and destiny of mankind are in the hands of Christ. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. This principle holds good throughout our entire social life. In proportion to the wisdom, the integrity, the exaltation of the judge, is the certainty of being treated magnanimously, and pronounced upon with tender justice and just tenderness. Were my life dependent upon the judgment of an assembly, upon any single sermon, I should beg to be heard by the princes in Israel, by the ripest sages, the profoundest thinkers, the

mightiest orators. I should receive more merciful consideration from them than from unthriving sucklings and beardless tyroes. Carrying this principle forward to its highest development, I call it an animating and consoling fact, that our final judgment is with the Almighty. Jesus knows what human life is. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He knows the power of the arch-enemy, the subtlety of his heart, the range of his arm, and the precision of his stroke! "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." With thrilling tenderness are God's dealings with the Jews set forth,—“But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.” I dare not be judged by man. He would be too hard upon me. He would be too eager to show his righteousness. I know, indeed, that Jesus is a lion as well as a lamb. I know that long ere time pealed its hours upon the human world, His frown fell upon the apostate angels, and that ever since they have been withered trees in the garden of the universe. Yet I know the gentleness, and patience, and tenderness of His deep, deep heart!

Did not that heart love me unto death? Was not its blood poured out as an atonement for my sin? Did it not yearn over me as mother never yearned over her firstborn? Then, too, I remember how He himself lived on this fallen globe. He knows how cold it is, how many demons prowl over it, how tempestuous are the storms that beat upon it, how man is the worst enemy of man, how we fight and devour one another! All this He knows; and when He comes to make judgment, it shall not be forgotten.

Am I making all this a ground of presumption? Truly not! I would make the very tenderness of Jesus my most powerful appeal to your fear! Will you grieve one who has done so much for you? Will you smite the heart that emptied itself in sacrifice that you might be saved? Speak! Say, will you? By so much as He loved us, by so much will He avenge our disregard of His mercy. What can the impenitent sinner do, when the cross itself is turned into a seat of judgment?

4. In view of all these considerations, you can understand the urgency with which I call for usefulness of life. You can also understand why I plead for caution in denouncing this tree or that. Only yesterday I noticed an instance singularly bearing upon this part of the subject. Dr. Guthrie, most genial and eloquent of men, has actually gone up to a tree and cursed it, and, lo! the tree

has *not* withered away! That great preacher, on the occasion referred to, actually cursed the tobacco-plant! Yet, what think you? I should like to tell this in a whisper, but a whisper is impossible in this prodigious edifice,—in the very next sentence he candidly confessed that he himself took snuff. You see what he did! He cursed the tobacco side of the plant, but not the snuffside, and for that reason the plant did not shrivel into a cinder! You see how easy it is to go up and down the world, attempting to wither trees we really do not like, and how easy, as in the case of the illustrious preacher, to interpose between the axe and our favourite tree, exclaiming, in piteous tones, “Let it alone this year also!” No, sirs! We must be honest all round. The church must not be partial in its verdict upon bad things. We must have honesty; and when the church purges herself from iniquity and inconsistency—when she really means what she says—she will with lightning-eye and thunder-breath pronounce upon the world’s upas, and the upas of the world will wither away! Let us brand all bad trees. Then we shall be truly useful. Can there be a more melancholy object than a useless man—a man of barren intellect, pined heart, fruitless life? Men are so multitudinous now, that the very vastness of the number misleads us as to the value of the individual. Reduce the appalling number—

reduce it to the least possible degree ; and with a solitary man on the face of the globe, what are the higher intelligences to deem of him, if no aspiration stir his heart, no impulse excite his hand to labour? It is a fool's plea that there are so many workers that others may afford to be idle. A philanthropist ever finds a sphere of usefulness in the necessities of the man who stands next to him. In order to be useful, we need not cross perilous seas, or encounter the dangers of foreign climes. Begin just where you are. Lift up your home as far towards heaven as mortals are permitted to ascend. Throw around the dulness of business the halo of faith in higher transactions. Turn the eye of the orphan towards the great Father, and lay the widow's weak hand on the arm of the all-supporting God. There is sphere enough for the exhaustion of all your energies. So long as iniquity abounds and sorrow weeps, not a man amongst us needs stand in the world's market-place, saying, "No man hath hired me." Christ hires us all, demands us all, and will help us all! He himself was the greatest worker. Not an idle moment interrupted the urgency of His life; the daybreak found Him at labour, the stars beheld Him at prayer! "Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus." And what is the spring of our usefulness—what is its motive, and what its sustentation? The answer

is at hand: "The love of Christ constraineth us." But for this ever-nerving love, our work would degenerate into toil. This love makes us joyous, long as the day lasts; and until sleep seals our eyelids it sings to us of more work and more recompence. Vital and enduring philanthropy, apart from this constraining love, is an impossibility. There may without it be a philanthropy of many leaves, but little fruit. There is a leaf-philanthropy; there is also a fruit-philanthropy. Christ's life, considered throughout as a mediation, shows us the exact line on which genuine and profound philanthropy must proceed. He worked from the centre to the circumference; and even if He began, as He often did, with the outer man, it was that He might the more effectually penetrate to the core, and do a vital work in the heart. Spring does not work from the branch to the root, but from the root to the branch. So with all true usefulness. The roots of manhood are in the heart, and any work that does not penetrate in that direction can only end in a cumbrous or gorgeous artificialism. Make the tree good, and you make the fruit good. I tremble for some of you. Leafage plenty—fruit none! You know not how to appease the world's moral hunger. Many a fainting one has come to you, hoping for the enlivening word, but that word has not been declared. I tremble for you; and I would tell you of my



trembling with many tears! He who wastes life's spring and life's summer cannot have anything in life's autumn; and as for the impending winter, no power can avert it, and, once come, it will never melt and brighten into another probationary spring!

## SPIRITS IN PRISON.

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“By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”—1 PET. iii. 19.

“For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead.”—1 PET. iv. 6.

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things . . . under the earth.”—PHIL. ii. 10.

IN the discussion of such a theme in the audience of a miscellaneous assembly, it would be impracticable to enter into that minute verbal criticism which could be understood and appreciated by those only who have devoted special attention to the philology of the sacred writings. It may be profitable, however, to present the results of such criticism as have been evolved by the ripest scholars in Christendom.

The question which I propose to discuss is this: Did Jesus Christ, between His crucifixion and resurrection, go into the place of departed spirits (the *Sheol* of the Old Testament or the *Hades* of the New) and preach to its occupants? If so, in what sense are we to accept the word “preach”? Did Christ preach the gospel to them with a view to their salvation? It will be important to remember that throughout the analysis and exposition of this theme

the word "prison" will not be regarded as equivalent to the word "hell" in its ordinary acceptation. Sheol, Hades, or prison, is used to denote *the place of departed spirits*; not Gehenna—not the lake of fire—not the abode of the damned—not what we now understand by the word hell. Those who forget this explanation will be thrown into hopeless perplexity; those who remember it will find light on every step of their progress.

It has been the practice of many eminent commentators to spiritualize the words "spirits in prison," and the words "them that are dead;" the meaning being *spiritually in prison*, and *spiritually dead*. Other equally eminent expositors read—"spirits *now* in the prison of hell;" "them that are *now* dead." It has been affirmed that the *antediluvians* were the "spirits in prison," that the Spirit of Christ was in Noah, and that thus Christ *representatively* preached to them.

Opinions which have been expounded and defended by the wisest and holiest teachers in the church have no little claim upon our confidence and veneration; and for this reason I wish to be most modest in asserting that I cannot accept such expositions of these difficult passages, and that these words represent profounder truths than are evolved by such methods of interpretation.

Anxious to avoid dogmatism, but yet more anxious to ascertain truth, I shall simply proceed

to inquire whether the suggestion that Jesus Christ did really enter hell and preach the gospel there with a view to the salvation of its human occupants, is at all in harmony with certain great principles, universally regarded as fundamental, and at all compatible with what is generally understood to be the analogy of faith. If this inquiry should conduct me to an affirmative conclusion on these two points, the popular method of *spiritualizing* shall be rejected as superficial and unsatisfactory.

What was Christ's object in coming from heaven? His own answer is conclusive: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Do we sufficiently consider all that is implied in that word "lost"? I regard that as a key-word. Some will say that the word "lost" relates to man while he is in the body and upon the earth. But by what authority is such limitation attached to the word? When *Christ* said "lost," who can tell what idea was present in His yearning, His infinite love? Was man lost in *body*, or was he lost in *spirit*, and in *body* merely as an effect? It was in his *spirit* that man was "lost;" and when Christ came to save the "lost," it was not the mere flesh and bones which make a human body that He came to redeem and sanctify, but the *spirit* dowered with the heritage of immortality. When *Christ* said "lost," who can tell how far His eye penetrated the region that to man is invisible—how far He looked down the ter-

rible chasm into which man had descended—what He saw in the darkness deeper than the gloom of the grave? Who can tell? We have our own little ideas about what is involved in the word “lost;” we have our own shallow notions as to what is signified by *ruin*; but when Jesus Christ, to whom Infinitude gives up its secrets and Eternity tells its unending story, looks upon a human being and says “lost,” we know not from what depth of His heart the sad word springs, or what breadth of shadow darkens the unutterable idea.

This standing-point must be made clear as noon. If we fail to comprehend what Jesus Christ really came to do, we shall never comprehend either the spirit or method of His working. I abide by His own answer, He “came to seek and to save the *lost* :” and are we to imagine that He came into the war-field four thousand years after the battle had begun? Was no one “lost” prior to the birth of the World’s Child in Bethlehem? Did He take no note of the unnumbered millions who had thronged the nations long before His redemptive advent? You will say that He came by promise even into the garden of Eden, that He was preached by prophets, that He was represented by sacrifices, every word of which is literally true; but the peculiar phraseology of the text I have quoted from His own lips must be well marked,—“The Son of man *is come* to seek

and to save that which was lost." He "is come" to do a certain work, not by type or representative, but in His own proper person. The foregoing ages of the world had had the gospel in promise, in prophecy, in type, in dim, mysterious, wonder-waking shadow; but *now* He himself, who is the Son of man, "*is come*" to seek and save every human being who comes within the range of the condition "lost." He has left the ninety and nine worlds that have kept their first estate, to seek the world that has become the vagabond of the universe, that He may bring it back with shoutings of gladness and triumph. Do you meet Him at the threshold of His work, and tell Him that He is too late, because some men have already gone into the captivity of hell—have passed away, laden with mountains of guilt, into the unseen regions—that the devil has imprisoned million on million beyond all numbering—and that at best Christ can save but a few of the inconsiderable remnant? I pronounce such a view dishonouring to the omnipotence of the divine Redeemer. What doth Christ himself say? He came, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. He is *mighty* to save. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and *have the keys of hell and of death.*" It is impossible to shut Christ out of any region of His universe. He has a right everywhere. Hell and destruction are open before

Him. He tracks "lost" man down to the deepest and darkest cavern. Even devils could not shut their gate of flame upon Him. He "is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" and I rejoice to believe that every "lost" child of Adam shall have at least the *opportunity* of accepting Christ's mediation—that Christ's great work has been published through the universe—and that even from hell's floor of fire, clear up to heaven's loftiest pinnacle of jasper, the story of redeeming love is known in all the pomp of its simplicity, all the omnipotence of its pathos.

This is the first position, then, in the argument; viz., that Christ came upon His mediatorial mission for the express purpose of saving that which was *lost*;—in other words, to meet the *very extremity* of human guilt and human want; to go down to the very lowest prison into which man had fallen, and to publish the good news of possible pardon and emancipation. My reading of the passages quoted from Peter's epistle brings me to the conclusion that between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection He went and preached to the spirits in prison, to them that are dead, to them who are in Hades, in the invisible state of the departed, and that He did this that *they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit*;—in other words, that He might supply an evangelical basis of judgment, and an evangelical possibility of spiritual life.

By an *evangelical basis of judgment* is meant that in the final assize, in which the human economy shall be brought to an issue, all human kind shall be judged by one Judge, judged by one great law, judged by the relationship sustained to one *person*, for we must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST. *Who shall judge the world?* The answer is most solemn, tender, and suggestive; viz., *He who offered to save the world!* “The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” “He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of *quick and dead.*” What wondrous vision of judgment was that which *he* saw who was permitted to close the written volume of Revelation? Sublime and awful are his words: “The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” There is, then, a day foretold in which the Lord Jesus shall gather all nations before Him, and divide them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. There is a day foretold on which Christ shall call forth the dead who are in the sea, the dead who are in the dust, the dead who are in hell. “The hour is coming, in the which *all that are in*



*the graves* shall hear His voice," and the eyes of every dead man shall be opened to see the *Lamb* in judgment. Thus, the idea of *sacrifice* is to run clear through all the terrestrial economy, even till the last judicial word has determined eternal destinies. It is the *Lamb* that shall be the judge. He who was man's *sacrifice* shall be man's *arbiter*. He who expired on the tree shall be lifted up on the judge's throne. "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the *Lamb*: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" In the face of all these testimonies as to the nature and the range of the final judgment, I cannot but believe that Christ has personally given, or will give by His chosen ministers, an opportunity of accepting Him as the Saviour to every human being, from Adam down to Adam's last descendant. It little becomes us, indeed, who from head to foot are full of guilt and uncleanness, to speak about equity and righteousness on the part of Almighty God, for whatever may become of our hypotheses and expositions, the Judge of all the earth shall assuredly do

right ; yet reading, as we are obliged to do, in the dim twilight of earth and time, we can see that when *all men* have had an *opportunity* of accepting Christ, when salvation has been *offered* to every human creature under heaven, that the judgment of the world by *Christ* is the most awful, yet the most righteous, judgment which Almighty God could have instituted.

Other aspects of the question may be best treated by examining one or two objections which may be laid against the theory thus suggested. For example, it may be contended that, under the old dispensations—as, for instance, in the case of the antediluvians here cited by the Apostle,—men sinned and were driven into the invisible world with God's wrath burning upon them. This is literally true. Men did sin ; men did die in their iniquity ; men were driven into another state of being in the very midst of their transgression. Let it be remembered, however, that those men lived and died in the grey of the world's young morning. They had never heard of Christ, except as a deliverer who was to come, perhaps, in some far-off age of human history. They had seen nothing but shadow, and type, and symbol, and dim hint ; and we can hardly conceive of such men being placed side by side before the great white throne with men who died amid the noon-blaze of civilization, and actually counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and being

sentenced to an equality of condemnation. On the other hand, let it be affirmed that *all* human creatures have had an opportunity of accepting Christ himself, and then we have a basis of judgment wide as the family of man, righteous as the heart of God. Some persons, I am aware, incline to leave these questions as mysteries : for my own part, I deem nothing mysterious which is open to the application of a rational and reverent suggestion ; and as there are many subjects which we are compelled to regard as mysterious, which, in their infinite delicacy, draw the veil more closely over themselves the more we attempt to penetrate their significance, I submit that it is unwise to regard anything as a mystery which, in reality, is capable of full interpretation. It may be quite as irreverent to regard a revelation as a mystery as to regard a mystery as a revelation. The fog of human criticism is sometimes mistaken for the veil of divine secrecy. Thus much may be replied to those who wish to leave every apparently difficult question for ever unsolved. With regard to the old-dispensation cases of retribution, it is ever to be borne in mind that in the first revelations of retributive power the *physical* element largely predominates. God lifts up His iron rod, and brings it down with shivering power upon the flesh and bones of His rebellious creatures. When His anger is fully kindled, He takes vengeance upon men with a high hand. Upon them He pours the waters of the

deluge ; upon them He rains fire and brimstone, as on Sodom and Gomorrah ; upon them He sends the embattled host, thirsting for blood which hath been poisoned against His government. Look through all the Old Testament record of retribution, and see how largely the physical element preponderates. Coming up from Sodom and Gomorrah, look at Egypt, plagued with frogs, and lice, and flies, and hail, and locusts, and thick darkness, and death of innumerable firstborn. Look at the fiery serpents chastising the discontentment of Israel. See the fire that is gone out of Heshbon, and the flame from the city of Sihon. See the earth rending, and swallowing up unholy men. Go on through the thrilling pages, and you find battle, and blood, and fire, and ruin : Tyre is a desolate rock ; Babylon has taken the millstones, and is grinding meal ; Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, are made a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse ; and on through suffering never to be described, and to be comprehended never ; on, until the day that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble—the day that shall burn them up, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch (Mal. iv. 1). Thus all through we have the awful presence of physical devastation. On well nigh every page the Lord is proclaimed as “a man of war,” and He smites the nations with “the edge of

the sword." This was all in keeping with the childhood of the world, and its various stages of development ; but the more we come into the heart of the gospel economy, the more we feel the insignificance of physical chastisement, and the more we dread that punishment of the heart—that moral retribution which lights its unquenchable fires in the conscience, that remorse which gnaws like an undying worm. While, therefore, it is clearly recorded that men did die in iniquity in every age of the world, I am not aware that there is one passage of Scripture which, being grammatically and philosophically interpreted, forbids the supposition that our Saviour did personally go down to their "prison," and offer them salvation. Many grounds could be suggested on which He *might* enter that dreary abode, and offer pardon and deliverance ; and in the absence of any scriptural declaration to the contrary, I hold the doctrine that all "lost" men have had an opportunity of returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

Against this view, the case of the rich man and Lazarus may be strongly urged. That case at first sight appears to be totally at variance with the idea now propounded. "The rich man died, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." He wished for a drop of water. His appeal to Abraham elicited the awful answer that communication between the two worlds is impossible. His appeal,

also, on behalf of his godless brethren was rejected. How, then, it may be asked, does all this bear upon the theory that Jesus "preached unto the spirits in prison"? In answering this, a fourfold reply might be suggested as to the case generally. (1) That Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison is perfectly isolated and unique, and is consequently not to be judged by any supposed precedents or analogies. (2) That this man asks for a physical, and not for a moral blessing. (3) That even had he asked for a moral blessing, Abraham is not the hearer and answerer of prayer. (4) That so far as his brethren were concerned they were upon the *earth*, and therefore cannot be compared with "the spirits *in prison*." Those who object to the theory now suggested should be cautious how they use this parable, for by their own methods of construction and interpretation they might be led to conclusions which they would emphatically reject; for example, because this man appealed to Abraham, *therefore* it is right to pray to saints in heaven; and again, Abraham says that the rich man received good things in this life and is now tormented,—that Lazarus received evil things and is now comforted, *therefore* all rich men are going to hell, and all poor men to heaven! And again, if Moses and the prophets were sufficient for *one* family, why not for *all* families? and if for all families, why did Jesus come into the world, and suffer,

and die, and rise again? Was not this a work of supererogation? And yet again, if men will not believe "though one rose from the dead," how is it that One who *has* risen from the dead is travelling through the earth in the greatness of His strength, seeking to save all human kind?—"For to *this* end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." We must be careful, then, how we lay down canons of interpretation, for sectarianism cannot grasp the infinite; bigotry cannot hold the heart of God! I do not accept this parable as analogical at all—I put it out of court entirely, in the consideration of this case; for if I regarded it as literally analogical it would, even so far as Christ is concerned, lead me to conclusions which are known to be morally fallacious, though logically inferential and irresistible. For example, in addition to what has just been suggested, *Lazarus* could not go from heaven to preach the gospel, *therefore* CHRIST could not come down to save sinners; if *Lazarus* had risen from the dead it would have been an unavailing expedient so far as the salvation of this family was concerned, therefore it was utterly *useless* for CHRIST to rise again from His grave!

Such is the general answer which might be suggested; but waiving these points altogether, I take my stand upon this particular reply:—The act of Christ preaching to the spirits in prison

was a special feature in His mediatorial mission, and is not to be arraigned before any bar that was constituted for the settlement of other questions. The Creator is not to be measured by the creature. A redemptive act is not to be measured by a governmental ordinance. Redemption is necessarily personal, unique, solitary, unapproachable; without parallel or duplicate; sublime in its individuality; too majestic for analogy, too awful for imitation.

*Why was Jesus Christ three days in the grave?* Why was He in the grave at all? Pierced in the hands, pierced in the feet, pierced in the side, bleeding at the temples, pronounced even by His enemies to be dead, why did He not instantly awake? This would have been resurrection, quite as much as though He had lain in the grave until His flesh had fallen into utter dust. Say, had He not some wondrous work to do during those three days? Might He not answer, "I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"? Did He not take the one thief to "paradise"? And who shall say that He did not preach to the other "in prison"? I am willing to believe that He did. I am willing to believe that He bruised the serpent's head in the serpent's own den. I am willing to believe that while Satan was triumphing in the imagined victory of



the crucifixion, at that very moment he sustained his severest blow, and that his supposed victim then "led captivity captive." And why believe all this? Because I find nothing in Scripture contrary to its spirit; because it enlarges my idea of the Saviour's empire; because it clears away many a difficulty in my reading of history; because it invests the coming judgment with a more august magnificence; because while it deepens hell into a denser gloom, it brightens heaven into a fuller glory!

I am aware that many speculative questions might now be started which it would be utterly impossible to answer. But if there be any destructive power in inquiries which human reason cannot satisfy, then I could undertake no easier task than to destroy Almighty God himself. We wish to know what terms were offered; how many accepted them; how they passed into heaven; and much of the same nature we would like to comprehend. There is, however, a limit to our inquiry. If the disembodied Messiah was accepted as a Saviour by every imprisoned spirit—if He left the old deceiver, the devil, trembling in the solitude of a lonely hell, without one human victim to break the appalling silence—I should cry out with gladdest joy that He had "spoiled principalities and powers," and that men had been turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

Some may inquire why there should be a special reference to the case of the antediluvians, "which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing"? I answer that this case may have been introduced for the purpose of teaching the doctrine of baptism which immediately follows; or, more probably, that the antediluvians are set forth as the representatives of the old world, as indeed they are called by this same Apostle in his second epistle: "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. ii. 4, 5). I think that this is evidently the meaning. The reference to the deluge is representative and inclusive. This is the most impressive instance of retribution upon record, and may, therefore, well be selected as an historical standpoint. If Christ preached in the spirit to the antediluvians, He also preached in the spirit to the *postdiluvians*, so that even on the common theory of explanation there could be no reason for this specific allusion: but regard the deluge as God's most signal display of retributive justice, and at once it stands out as the great event of olden history, the great vindication of moral government.

Brought thus far along the argumentative line, I can see a depth and beauty in the language of

Paul, which declares that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, *and things under the earth*," which could not be discerned before. This expression—"things under the earth"—has greatly baffled the commentators. They have forgotten that Jesus Christ came into the world to "bruise the head" of the serpent, and that right down to the deepest depth of moral degradation the fact of His victory was to be proclaimed. The *head* of the Crucified One is in heaven, and His pierced *foot* is on the head of the serpent. He filleth all in all. The angels crown His honoured head, the serpent dreads His bruising foot, and man is welcomed to His open side! "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." Heaven shall declare Him King; earth shall worship at His footstool; and hell's hoarse Amen shall fill up the measure of His infinite victory!

I shall be asked, What of the heathen? If men die in heathen darkness who have never so much as heard of the name of Jesus Christ, how can they render Him homage? Will Christ preach the gospel to them after they have entered the state of the dead? The Apostle returns a decisive answer:—"When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law

written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. ii. 14, 15). "The Judge of all the earth shall do right" by the heathen. Christ hath given His church a commission,—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” That is the duty of the church. She is to be a traveller. No provision has been made for her to sit down indolently. Her mission will permit no rest but the rest of philanthropic toil. She is to be more daring than mailed warriors; more enterprising than the boldest navigators; more eager of conquest than the most ambitious kings. This is the boundary of our obligation. We are to take the good news of salvation and tell it under the fire of the tropics, and tell it under the cold of the undissolving ice. “All the world” is Christ’s wide word of evangelical commission; “every creature” is Christ’s limit of evangelical election. Let us do our simple and noble duty to those who sit in darkness, and leave the speculation to Him who would have “all men everywhere to be saved.”

Certain passages in the Old Testament may be referred to as apparently opposed to the view now vindicated; such as, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man;” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God.” These passages are literally consistent with the

proposed interpretation. They are prophetic. They are declarative of an awful fact in the divine government. A period shall come when all restorative means shall cease to operate, and the kingdom of the Mediator shall be given up unto the Father.

The subject must be guarded from misapprehension. I have not been speaking of men who once on earth enjoyed every opportunity of being saved through Christ, as the persons described as "spirits in prison." I dread the possibility of not being able to speak with convincing clearness upon this point. I warn every man, with most rigorous fidelity, and most tender solicitude, against the notion that, after he has passed into the state of the dead, he will have another opportunity of receiving the offer of salvation. O how black a lie lurks at the heart of that mad delusion! "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Christ's salvation hath already appeared unto us. The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have besought us to repent and live. We are not to compare ourselves with the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Egypt and Babylon. We do

not live in the early morning, but in the far-advanced shining of the sun. We do not assemble round the typic altar, but around the atoning Man. I speak with fullest reverence, with most trembling awe, in declaring that God has *exhausted* Himself upon us, in giving up His Son to die, the just for the unjust. Mercy's sweetest tone has been sounded in our ear. Love's mightiest persuasion has assailed our stubborn heart. Omnipotence itself has interposed between our souls and death. Tremendous, then, are our responsibilities. So far as *we* are concerned, the line of mercy is most broadly and vividly drawn. If we deafen our ear against the good tidings, our deafness shall become eternal. The case of some of you is awful beyond all midnight blackness. You were born of pious parents. The hands that rocked your cradle were hands oft clasped in prayer. From the womb you were spoken of as being lent unto the Lord. The dew of grace richly glittered on the morning of your devoted life. Alas! where are you *now*? With savage hands you have torn God's book to rags; with a maniac's frenzy you have cast down the altar at which parents offered their intercession; with demoniac rage you have gnashed your teeth in the face of Infinite Love! Say, was it not *you* that passed by and wagged your head scornfully in presence of the dying Lamb? Was it not *you* that pierced the heaving side of the suffering

Immanuel? Was it not *you* that laughed the scorner's wild, frantic laugh in reply to the Saviour's tenderest welcome? Review your life. God gave you a noble youth, and you deliberately put through it the knife of the suicide; God gave you a manhood that might have been noble, and you sold it to the service of the devil; and now that you have come to old age, your very bones are putrid with guilt, and your tottering feet tremble on the brink of ruin. I must be plain with you. You must not be allowed to pillow your head upon a lie. If you are imagining that after all you will have an opportunity of entering the abode of the blest, you give God contradiction to His face, and you crucify His Son afresh! "*To-day* if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts." "*Now* is the accepted time." The day is at hand, and the terrible word is, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." While Mercy hovers over the earth, you may find a lodgment in her heart; but once gone, she returns no more for ever.

The subject thus presented greatly enlarges one's idea of the *completeness* of the Saviour's work, and the vastness of His empire. It throws noon-light over many dark wonders in the world's primitive history. I do not look upon Old Testament arrangements as *final*: the Old Testament period was emphatically the period of hope and promise;

a conqueror was foretold ; a prophet was to be raised up ; a branch was to grow ; a light was to shine : meanwhile, sin was committed and punishment was awarded,—that punishment consisting of the imprisonment of the rebellious. The public virtue of the universe must be maintained ; God must set his brand upon sin : all this was necessary, even under a dispensation of promise and hope. “In the fulness of time,” manhood’s second birthday came. The Child of prophecy was born. Prediction was consolidated into history. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was *lost*. He began His work where man began his apostasy. He started where man started. He began at the beginning. And having “once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust ; . . . being put to death in the flesh, . . . He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” Thus His work was *complete*. Being no respecter of persons, the men who lived in the world’s first age were as dear to Him as the men who shall witness its final conflagration. To those men the promise of His coming was originally announced, and now, in person, He offered to turn them “from the power of Satan unto God.” Thus Christ’s mission was, and will be, to all mankind ; so that when all nations are gathered before Him, they will see One from whom they have had direct and gracious offers of mercy.



It has been suggested that this view gives the antediluvians an advantage over others ; for while men in our day have but one opportunity, they had *two*, of becoming prepared for heaven. Apart altogether from the selfishness which, to the end of the world, will wickedly persist in charging God with injustice, because He gives a penny to each labourer, irrespective of the time spent in labour, this objection is altogether unphilosophical. It is not true that such an arrangement would give an advantage to the antediluvians ; and even if it *were* true, its truthfulness would not destroy the force of the argument, for nothing can be clearer than that God carries on His system of government and discipline by what may be called a system of unequal advantages. To one He gives two talents, to another five, and to another ten. Is not that giving one man an advantage over another ? On one nation shines the full light of the gospel, on another settles the midnight of utter paganism. While the great majority of men can *see*, tens of thousands are born *blind*. While some men are endowed with commanding genius, others from their birth are doomed to idiocy. While the eyes of the wicked stand out with fatness, the godly poor seek water and there is none. And so all through we have a system, I repeat, of unequal advantages. These things are among the mysteries of the Most

High. Out of this chaos He will mould the most luminous and symmetrical order.

It has been said that this view of the subject adds a deeper gloom to the lot of the finally impenitent. "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment." The smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever. It is right that it should be so. They have resisted the loving Father; they have despised the atoning Son; they have quenched the striving Spirit. All the economy of grace they have set at naught. They have gone straight past the open door of the Saviour's entreating heart. They have looked with a mocker's eye at the uplifted cross. What can become of them but that God should laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh? What can the universe—wearied and groaning under the intolerable load—do but shake them out of its indignant breast, and let them fall into the unbottomed lake of fire?

May our soul never come into the mystery of this fate.

A TROUBLED LIFE

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THE form of what is denominated "the sermon" appears to be so thoroughly settled amongst all sections of the church, that not a little danger would attend any attempt at a fundamental change. Perhaps the utterance of a mere wish may excite alarm among those who have been taught to look for three heads, three sub-heads, and three heads of application (all the heads generally being small, bald, and empty) in every discourse. I duly feel the horror of the risk. I forehear the gentle protest of the timid, and the piercing yell of the obstinate, and yet, with my eyes wide open, I make headway to the forbidden land. I mean to say that we want *some* change (I purposely avail myself of a general expression) in the time-worn mould of the English sermon. It has been in practice so long, that it has become a pillow for somnolent heads. The sermon, in too many cases, has come to be endured rather than to be enjoyed. It is too often more of a sedative than a stimulant. The suggestion of many changes is not difficult, but at this time I prefer to adopt rather than pro-

pose ; and therefore, instead of announcing a few words as a text, I invite you to regard yourselves as constituted into an immense Bible class, and to accompany me with your eye, as well as with your ear, in an attempt to interpret part of the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Genesis. Let us begin at the eighteenth verse :—

“ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.”

Sooner or later bad men will find an opportunity of injuring the good. In the revolutions of the wheel of Providence, the bad man's turn is sure to come. Determine to slay any man, and the very determination will create its own ways and means. It is a very touching picture which finds expression in this verse. Look at it ; in the gray distance you may see a lad, seventeen years of age, beautiful beyond any of his contemporaries,—so beautiful that in after years he formed the subject of poet and artist ; he comes with messages from his father's lips ; his first word is intended to be one of love ; already his own kiss is upon his lip, prepared to seal the cheek of his brethren ; close at hand you have nine men gladdening each other with the thought that they have the hated one in their own power ; quickly their conspiracies are completed, and the savagest of their hearts is even now thirsting for blood. Nearer and nearer the

unsuspecting child, wearing the abominated garment, comes—comes to face intending murderers. *It is a hint of the manner in which truth advances into danger.*

Verse 19. “And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.”

Prejudice is tyrannous. It shuts you up to one view of a man. These murderous brethren might have employed many other designations, yet their hatred blinded them to every aspect of their brother but one, viz., “this dreamer.” Whenever they saw him, that angle was sure to be first noticed—indeed, nothing else was seen. Terrible is the offence even of dreaming a wrong dream.

Society cannot consent to crown a man who has acted so badly as to encourage a vision which did not flatter it. Why did not he bury so hateful a dream in the bottomless sepulchre of oblivion? It was bad enough to *dream* such a dream, but it was unpardonable to *tell* it. No; society will not forgive a man who even dreams the wrong way. He may be a brother—a younger brother; he may carry the very best messages to society; he may be adorned with the choicest vesture which his Father, God, can give—but it is nought!—did not he once dream a dream? Aye! that dream will be for ever associated with his name, and will prevent that name, in the meantime, making much

headway in the vulgar and unthinking world. Is not the same spirit with us to this day? Lift up your eyes, and mark yonder man approaching you; he has produced a great poem, a sublime picture, or has excogitated an idea which he deems worthy of your regard. Were he a stranger, you might look at his offerings, or listen to his messages; but he is a brother, and you instantaneously remember that he once dreamed an offensive dream, or founded an obnoxious institution, or defended an unpopular cause, and that, and that alone, is the aspect which you see; and though he be charged with a Father's messages, you meditate the easiest method of extermination.

Verse 20. "Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

You may slay the dreamer, but you cannot slay the *dream*. In this verse you mark the operation of this divine law, *men kill bodies but cannot kill ideas*. In this determination you see at once the strength and the weakness of man—his strength, "let us slay him;" his weakness, "we shall see what will become of his dreams." True, they spoke these latter words in scorn; but they knew not what they said—they apprehended not that, subtle law which keeps the spiritual from the grasp

of the murderer's hand. The dream was a fact. It was a beam of light shot from the higher spheres, and one day must be found again; or it was a seed dropped from an angel's hand, at the bidding of God, and, even if baptized with the dreamer's blood, would somehow spring up and bear fruit. Yes; the spiritual is ever going on; its footprint may be either a grave or a cradle; it advances as well in the darkness as in the crowned day; its progress is as steady as the march of death, yet joyous as the boundings of unailing life.

"We will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him." Sin generates sin. An isolated iniquity is an impossibility. The murderer's heart is ever connected with the murderer's tongue. "Let us slay, and we will say," is the rapid course of diabolic policy. And there is more in this arrangement than may at first sight appear; there is a hint here that *men must account for their deeds*. They know that the doing-time will certainly be followed by the questioning-time, and they must be prepared with a story that will explain circumstances. Ah! we cannot get far without coming into contact with the law which says, *You must one day tell how things happened!*

Verse 22. "And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

God thus divides the counsels of the wicked. Is there unanimity even in hell? God has often saved His church by throwing into confusion the discussions of her enemies. He works in thought as well as in matter. He can turn an idea round, and show aspects which astonish the craftiest tactician. Instead of scattering the bodies, He scatters the thoughts of the evil, and, whether by this way or that, He assuredly builds the immoveable throne of righteousness.

Verses 26, 27. "And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content."

This is the casuistry of devils. Not murder, say they, but slavery; not into heaven by one blow, but round to it through endless miseries; not murder, by which we shall gain nothing, but merchandise, by which we shall realize two shekels per head! And this was regarded as a branchlet plucked from the tree of mercy! True enough, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." This spirit, too, is yet abroad: first of all an idea of terrible import seizes the mind of a gang of persecutors; their counsels are divided; then the victim is handed off in a manner which saves their skirts from visible blood, and puts something into their hands—say two shekels' worth of applause,



or honour, or commendation. A compromise this, over which the very least sagacious devil might grin in triumph. Compromises are the velvet coverings of ruin. These lucky ideas of the diplomatists baffle and disgrace the church. This bastard mercy is but a poor apology for plain murder done in the plain daylight.

Verse 28. "Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."

This is one of the unexpected turns which life is ever taking. Men start for Dothan to bring their brethren, but they go down to Egypt in the company of their enemies. Poor lad! as he turned his back upon the children of the same father, the sight might have broken their hearts; but you cannot break hearts which are covered with the armour-plate of tyrannic prejudice. Yet it was right; there are many ways to elevation, and Joseph was now in one of them. A man may enter a city as a slave, but if he mark his opportunities he may leave it more than a king.

Verses 29, 30. "And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?"

These Reubens are too common in the church. They are the men of good intentions; the men

who say, "Don't do *that*, but do *this*," all the while having some benevolent idea which they hope ultimately to realize. Such men often defeat themselves. Had they courageously proclaimed their convictions, and firmly resisted the proposals of the enemy, they might have done something in life worth doing, but they kept their purpose wrapped up in silence, and, in the hour of fancied triumph, discovered that the ground had been struck from beneath their feet!

Man! having a conviction, announce it, expound it, cling to it, never desert the ground. While thou art away, thy great purpose may be handed over to a band of Ishmeelites for twenty shekels.

Verses 31, 32. "And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no."

What is this? It is the lie trying to make itself like the truth. Could a lie get along the world's highway if it were quite naked and open-faced, and so garrulous as to tell everybody exactly what it is? Has it not always to undergo a process? Does it not trust to an opportunity to attach itself somehow to the "sun-skirts" of truth, and make an impression by its veracious appearance? These men were well enough acquainted with human nature to know that bad things of

all kinds require *preparation*. If twelve men intend to tell the truth concerning any object they have seen, they have no lesson to learn beforehand—there is not to be a choice of phrases; the whole is left to the simplicity and transparency of unsophisticated nature: but when a lie is to be driven into any ear, then men must study their several parts; they must plot and arrange so as not to contradict each other; all the story must be rehearsed in secret congress, so that, when the time of action comes, there may not be a harsh and fatal discord.

*The truth always gives man less trouble than a lie.* Mark that!

Verses 33, 34. "And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days."

Here is grief arising out of ignorance; and this is precisely what is transpiring every day,—men not seeing farther than the rags which they grasp; men mistaking rags for ruin. Jacob would, indeed, have grieved had he known the actual state of the case; still his sorrow would have arisen from his ignorance—ignorance of God's full-orbed purpose. He could have seen at most but the faintest rim of that purpose, and that would have portended sore

evil. Jacob grieved over a fancied woe, the heart leaped at once to the worst conclusion, hope's ray was quenched, and the weeper poured floods upon the unbroken darkness. It is the same with weepers now; they see "part of His ways," and cry in bitterness: when they see all, the light will strike their tears into gems of glory.

You will observe that in this purposely thin-edged innovation upon the form of the stereotyped sermon the constant endeavour has been to turn facts into principles. I have not cared to trouble you with an analysis of the "spicery, balm, and myrrh" which the Ishmeelites were carrying down to Egypt, nor to indicate the latitude and longitude of Gilead, nor to present a genealogical table by which you can trace out the pedigree of the Midianites. I dare not say that it would be uninteresting to many hearers to have a packet of the "spicery" handed round for examination, or to look at a handful of the soil of Gilead, or to dwell with curious wonder upon the embalmed limb of a Midianite. For none of those things do I care. I am in quest of the *principles* which belong to all time, the doctrines that comprehend all latitudes, and appeal to every heart for a home. When I gaze upon the piled mountains that tower in sublimest scorn away from man's smoking cities, and that are scarfed with drapery that the lightnings might have woven, I care not to read the

little label which the godfathers and godmothers of geography may have written upon them. The geographers have carried their baptismal font all over the globe, and given a name to every hill, and river, and lake, and plain, and stream. The *name* has its uses, most truly ; but I want to inhale the *poetry* that is breathing around the royal mountains, and to grow in majesty while appreciating the pomp and communing with the spirit of nature. Many a technicalist can remember all the geographical names of the scenes through which he has passed, who does not bring out of them a thought to thrill or a recollection to cheer. He is a mere memorist ; not an Abraham to whom God raises up children from the very stones. And as with technical travellers, so with technical readers of the immortal volume. Of what avail is it that we have seen the manger at Bethlehem, if the Saviour who was laid in it has not been born in our hearts ? What if we have touched the very cross itself with our physical hands, if the great truth which it represents has not become the central power in our personal history ? Knowledge must be turned into wisdom. You know that Christ was crucified on Calvary, yet that knowledge will be but as a millstone round your neck, unless through it you feel the necessity of being crucified *with Him*. Men cannot climb to heaven upon the ladder of facts. While, therefore, we are zealous in mastering the

technicalities of the Bible, we should with an intenser zeal seek to know Jesus, by whom the sins of the world are taken away.

I shall hope that this method of reading history will be accepted and improved by those of you who yet have most of your reading to do. Penetrate to principles. Open the door of facts, and enter the inner chamber of thought. He is a shallow historian who registers only the undulations of the social, political, and ecclesiastical surface. As a student of the universe, I wish to know not only the stupendous palpable existences,—such as sun, moon, stars, seas, and mountains,—but I wish to know their birth-forces. I would retrace them, as far as mortals are permitted to walk the mysterious path, until I see them as creative syllables rolling from the lips of Omnipotence,—nay, more, if possible, see them while they slumber as *purposes* in the Infinite Heart. He who takes me to the earliest germ of social or national life, is to me the true historian; but he who finds that earliest germ in anything short of divine volition, is unfit to guide me through the black ravines, or the temple corridors, or the mountain grandeurs of the world's entrancing story. In all Bible history we find God upon the circle. There is no page dedicated to Atheism. God is always there in shining person, or guiding eye, or directing voice, or celestial effluence; that holy book—hear me! I speak with

filial reverence—is, so far as one world is concerned, *the very biography of God!* Ay, God himself is the central character, and as He sweeps in majesty over our tiny globe, age by age, we see kings, and thrones, and empires, and nations attached to His flaming chariot. This sublimest of all historical books is not a mere registry of facts or dates—it is not a mere accumulation of meteorological tables, showing the variations of political or moral climate, or representing the tide-marks of national advancement or recession; it is a chronicle of the one heart of God, and the one heart of humanity, and thus it is the blended story of the heavens and the earth! Take heed how ye read that all-eclipsing story.

## GLORYING.

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom : . . . but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.”  
—JER. ix. 23, 24.

AN idea in this text to which I would assign special prominence is this,—*There is at least so much similarity between the nature of God and the nature of man, that both God and man can take delight in the same thing.*

The spirit of the text is saying, Take delight in loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, because *I* take delight in them ; come up to *My* moral altitude ; place *your* affections where I place *Mine* ; learn the divinity of your origin, and the possible splendour of your destiny, from the fact that you have it in your power to join Me in loving mercy, righteousness, and judgment.

This idea is increased in significance by the fact that the appeal is addressed to man in his *depraved* condition : that is, notwithstanding man's guilt, weakness, and moral disintegration, there is enough



of divinity in his shattered nature to enable him to harmonize with the voice of God in lauding and magnifying all that is true, and pure, and good. This idea, rightly understood, fills one with adoring wonder. It is God seeking the sympathetic companionship of man ; it is the Creator appealing to the creature to join Him in the appreciation and service of moral excellence ; it is the King inviting and welcoming a disloyal subject to an abandoned throne ; it is the benignant Father identifying and honouring His own lineaments in the face of a rebellious and ruined child.

In the verses of which the text is a part, God addresses three divisions of the human family—the Wise, the Powerful, the Wealthy. And is there any other class which may not be placed in one of these categories ? Properly looked at, is not this division an exhaustive classification of the human race ? It may, at all events, aid us in realizing the spirit of the text if we keep this arrangement vividly before us. *Here*, for example, you have the devotees of science, philosophy, and art ; they are the *wise* : *there* you have the plumed conquerors, and the crowned monarchs of immeasurable empires ; they are the *powerful* : *yonder* you have the owners of the gold and silver, the proprietors of houses and land ; they are the *rich*. Each class is sitting at the feet of its chosen idol—Science, Arms, Wealth ; all clad in robes of royalty, if not of godhood. In the hand of

each idol is the sceptre of a venerated mastery, and the temple of each shakes with the thunder of heathenish worship. Such is the picture we have before us. Now to these temples God comes, and, with the majesty of omnipotence, the authority of infinite wisdom, and the benignity of all-sustaining fatherhood, says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches."

"*Glory*"! *That* is a word which is pregnant with meaning; and it can be better explained by paraphrase than by etymology. Let not man "glory" in wisdom, might, and wealth, so as to be absorbed in their pursuit, so as to make a god of either of them, so as to regard them as the ultimate good, so as to commit to either his present happiness and endless destiny.

"*Wisdom*"! *That*, too, is a word fraught with large significance. The "wisdom" referred to is not that which cometh from above—beautiful with celestial hues, and instinct with celestial life: it is a "wisdom" which is destitute of the *moral element*; the "wisdom" of an inquisitive, prying, restless intellect; that eyeless and nerveless "wisdom" by which the world "knew not God," and which, when looked at from above, is "foolishness;" the "wisdom" which is all brain and no heart; the "wisdom" of *knowledge*, not of *character*; the "wisdom"

which dazzles man, but which, when alone, is offensive to God.

“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.” If we follow an earnest student of science totally dissociated from religion, the meaning of the admonition may break upon us. His love of science amounts to a species of idolatry; the hammer of geology and the telescope of astronomy are the instruments through which all his knowledge of the heavens and the earth comes. With unwearying diligence he collates facts and notes phenomena; he estimates forces, weighs bodies, discovers laws, proclaims doctrines, with unabating enthusiasm; he is acute, too, in the detection of subtle processes, and most sagacious in the interpretation of unusual combinations of circumstances; every discovery fills him with passionate delight; his very dreams are of greatness; he is thrilled with the hope that presently the keys of the universe will be put into his hands, and not immeasurably far off is the glory of sitting on the dictator’s throne and determining the philosophies of the world. A flash of benevolence, too, gleams through his lofty purposes; for he says he will find out the causes of disease, and regenerate the physical nature of man; he will discover the primal laws of mind, and so affect the entire mental economy of man as to make an everlasting end of all human perplexity; in short, he will build a tower which shall rise unto heaven, and all Nature

shall lie at his feet, owning his perfect mastery, and declaring that every secret has been dislodged from her heart. Such are the ambitious intents of this youthful enthusiast. He goes to work with characteristic vigour ; he gains knowledge with marvellous rapidity ; his name attains eminence in scientific circles ; his works become the text-books of scholars, and everywhere he is regarded as a *wise* man. Now so far there is much to admire ; all investigations, however, have been conducted just as you would explore a cathedral or temple whose architect and builder are dead and forgotten. Nowhere has he seen God. He has turned over a thousand pages in the great book which men call the universe, but his eyes have nowhere lighted upon God. Still he is what is known as a *wise* man, and it is to such a man that God comes and says, "*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.*" Such a man, in fact, has not begun the alphabet of true wisdom ; all the while he has been in the rudimentary region of *knowledge*. As for Wisdom, he has not seen her hiding-place ; he is but a well-informed fool, one who has not embraced and honoured wisdom. Where, then, "shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? . . . The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. . . . Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? . . . God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the

place thereof. For He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. . . . And unto man he saith, Behold, the fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom ; and *to depart from evil* is understanding " (Job xxviii.).

One substantial reason for not glorying in the kind of wisdom which we have attempted to depict, is *the necessary littleness of man's vastest acquisitions*. The greatest men are ever the first to exclaim, "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing;" the most successful man of science, the man of peerless power, the man who has left his footprints on a wider track of the heavens and the earth than any other discoverer, comes laden with trophies, and as he lays them down in the museum says, "Lo, these are *parts* of His ways ; but *how little* a portion is heard of Him ! but the thunder of His power who can understand ?" The higher he ascended, the more he realized his own insignificance ; when he attained the outermost verge of his appointed sphere he felt that he could hardly touch *the hem* of the royal garment. Science is a race after God ; but can the Infinite ever be overtaken ? Science, perhaps, never got so close to God as when she bound the capitals of the world together with bands of lightning, and flashed the wisdom and eloquence of parliaments from continent to continent. High day of triumph

*that*; she was within hand-reach of the veiled Potentate—one step more, and she would be face to face with the King—was it not so? What was there between Science and God in that moment of sublimest victory? Nothing, nothing, but—Infinity! “*There is no searching of His understanding.*”

Another point will show the folly of glorying in the kind of wisdom just delineated, viz., *the widest knowledge involves but partial rulership.* You say you have found a *law* operating in the universe. Be it so; can you *suspend* or *reverse* the divine appointment? I refer not to those regions in which God has been pleased to give man a certain power, but to the great, the *necessary* laws of creation. Can you turn back the currents of virtue which are evermore streaming from the heart of God? Can you, so to speak, amputate a limb from the vital organism, and keep it alive without connection with the Supreme Power? Can you place yourself at the tree-root, and tell the spring, which is advancing to clothe that tree with luxuriant foliage, that you can do without its services, and for once you will undertake to fabricate the verdurous garment with your own hand? “Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Can you bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Can you send the lightnings, that they may go, and say unto you, Here we are?” Have

you an arm like God? or can you thunder with a voice like Him? The argument is this,—however extensive may be our knowledge, knowledge can only help us to obey; it never can confer aught but the most limited rulership; and even that sovereignty is the dominion not of lord, but of servant, the rulership which is founded in humility and obedience—the rulership whose seat is beneath the shadow of the Great Throne.

Is man, then, *without an object* in which to glory? It is as natural for man to glory as it is natural for man to breathe; and God, who so ordered his nature, has indicated the true theme of glorying: “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth *Me*.” Here let us rejoin the earnest student of science, supposing now that, in addition to his being ardently scientific, he is intelligently devout. He goes to work as before; the flame of his enthusiasm is not diminished by a single spark; his hammer and his telescope are still precious to him, but now, instead of being in pursuit of cold, abstract, inexorable *laws*, he is in search of the wise, and mighty, and benevolent *law-giver*; in *legislation* he finds a *legislator*, and in the *legislator* he finds a Father. Let us watch him in one of his engagements. It has come to his knowledge that geology and Moses are at variance; he sinks a shaft and descends into the lower parts of the earth, that he may himself be present in the very

arena of controversy ; standing round the shaft we hear the ring of his hammer as it smites the rocks ; for a time a chilling and blinding fear seizes our misgiving hearts, lest every blow struck at the rock should be a blow struck at the face of revelation, from which revelation can never recover ; down he goes through formations (the geological name for cemeteries), through rocks which are tombstones ; deeper and deeper he descends, getting farther and farther into mystery ; now he looks at revelation, and anon he looks with anxiety at the rock ; another blow and another look ; his heart palpitates with strange emotion, a terror too awful for speech makes his knees smite together : shall he strike again ? another stroke may dash the Bible out of men's already trembling hands—he pauses, he quivers, he weeps, he prays, and then—he *strikes* ! We await the issue with mysterious awe ; slowly he returns to the surface ; on his countenance are the traces of recent agony (such agony as mental warriors only know), in one hand he holds the hammer, in the other he grasps his Bible ; for a moment he cannot break the silence of his own wonder, his very gladness is too deep for words ; at length he lifts up his voice like a trumpet, and his contagious enthusiasm startles hallelujahs from every lip as he exclaims, "THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER !" and it is in *that* hour (holy and triumphant !) that God comes near and says,



"Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth *Me*," and then places on the head of the devout student a diadem whose splendour eclipses the brightness of congregated suns.

Man's glorying, then, is to be restrained until he reaches the "*ME*," the personality, the living one: for example, you have found a law, *be glad!* speedily you find another law which confirms it, still be glad; your discoveries multiply, your museum is crowded with the memorials of brilliant conquests, still be *glad*, but don't "*glory*;" now put all your discoveries and conquests together—connect the triumphs of your skill, and tell me what they spell? Read *aloud!* Let men and angels hear! You answer that, having put all together, the word which they constitute is GOD! *Now* glory! *Now* shout for gladness! *Now* make a joyful noise unto the Rock of salvation; and if any cold-hearted, sneering, unsympathetic brother should demand the reason of your joy, put your finger on this warrant, and answer, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth *ME*."

What we want, then, is *personal* knowledge of a PERSON: we would know not only the works, but the author, for they are mutually explanatory. Know the *man* if you would understand his actions; know *God* if you would comprehend

nature, providence, or grace. The devout student says he finds God's footprints everywhere; he says they are on the rocks, across the heavens, on the heaving wave, and on the flying wind; to *him*, therefore, keeping company with science is only another way of "walking with God." Science becomes a wise and reverent guide, opening doors just far enough (for it can never do more than set the door ajar) to give him a glance at the milder glories of the Eternal King; and does he in return offer oblations to science! Does he mistake the guide for the Sovereign? Nay! he thanks science as you would thank one who had led you to a position whence you could contemplate "such a light as never shone on land or sea." Science is nothing to the devout student, except so far as it brings him nearer God; he must find not only the writing but the writer; not only the voice but the speaker: as science conducts him through the innumerable chambers of creation, he exclaims, "My heart crieth out for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Science may be an astronomer, but who wrote the glittering page which she attempts to decipher? Science may be a geologist, but who moulded the planet whose birthday she is ever anxious to determine? Science may be a botanist, but who traced the lines of beauty which she attempts to interpret? Science may be a metaphysician, but who constructed the

mind, into whose mysteries she would penetrate? Science may be an agriculturist, but if God withhold the dew, only *that*, science herself will die of thirst! Thus is the devout student continually reverting to the "who;" he "glories," not in the architecture but in the architect—not in the ladder on which angels travel, but in the God against whose heart the head of that ladder rests.

The text, however, goes still farther; it relates not only to personality, but to character: the *deist* pauses at the former, the *Christian* advances to the latter: "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, *that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.*" The idea would admit of some such expression as this: Any knowledge of God, the Creator and Legislator of the physical creation, should be regarded as merely preparatory, or subordinate to an apprehension of God as the *Moral Governor*: that if you know God as Creator *only*, you can hardly be said to know Him at all; that if you tremble at His *power* without knowing His *mercy*, you are a pagan; if you seek to please Him as a God of intelligence, without recognizing Him as a God of purity, and justice, and love, you are ignorant of Him, and your ignorance is crime. Let him that glorieth, even glorieth in *God*, glory in knowing God as a *moral being*, as the righteous Judge, as the loving Father.

There must not be adoration of mere power; we must not be satisfied with utterances of amazement at His majesty, wisdom, and dominion; we must go farther, get nearer, see deeper; we must know God *morally*, we must feel the pulsations of His heart—His heart!—that dread sanctuary of righteousness, that sempiternal fount of love.

The meaning may be seen more clearly by listening to an evangelical man of science as he addresses a deist: you, says he, are amazed at God, as He walks on the wings of the wind, as He preserves the organization of nature in perfect order, swaying His sceptre throughout boundless dominions from age to age; now I am as amazed as you are, and as reverent, but I go farther: I adore His power, I also recognize His *righteousness*; I am lost in His wisdom, but I see that wisdom quite as much in the arrangements of the *moral* world as in the mechanism of the heavens; you see Him enkindling suns, I also see Him enkindling hope in the breast of desolation; you see Him moulding globes, I also see Him drying the tears of sorrow; you see Him controlling the terrible forces of creation, and I also see Him grasping the orphan's hand, and leading the blind by a way they know not; you see Him marshalling countless populations (populations distinct as the mountains but one as the globe), I also see Him putting His hands on little children, and crowning them with the

diadem of His blessing ; you see Him in the earthquake, the fire, the tempest, and you say, " Behold His might !" I see Him in His incarnate Son, dying on Calvary, and say, "*This* is the power of God."

*He* only knows God who knows Him as the God which exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. *Science* can never reveal the full-orbed Godhead. Science can only stand in the outer court, begging for the crumbs which fall from the banquet-table. Science can only see through a glass darkly. Science can never weave for herself a wedding garment which will entitle her to a place at the feast. Hear it and believe ; it must be *love* that enters into the inner court—it must be *love* that takes a child's seat—it must be *love* that sees face to face—it must be *love* on whose shoulder is found the nuptial badge. It is true, in the widest possible sense, that "he who loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love." Love is its own microscope, love is the wise interpreter ; sympathy can see farther than the telescope ; the door of God's innermost chamber flies back at the appeal of love.

If we are justified, then, in so rendering the text as to draw the doctrine that he only who knows God *morally* knows God *truly*, there is one all-important warning to be given, viz., *you can only attain a moral knowledge by a moral process* ; that is to say, you can never rectify your relations

to God by any other method than that which God himself has appointed, and that method is a moral one. No man can be saved on account of his great wisdom, or on account of anything in himself; the proudest philosopher must come to the same point as the unlettered peasant; both must come as little children to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and "count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." Science can give no passport to immortality; science can give no guarantee of safety: "*this* is life eternal, to know *Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

Is there a more melancholy spectacle than that of a man of science who is ignorant of God's *moral* nature, and who is, consequently, wandering into outer darkness? What answer can he render to the accusations which must eventually fall upon all who know not the true God? He has spent his life in exploring the temple, but never turned a loving eye to the God whose glory fills it; he has penetrated a thousand rocks, but knows not the Rock of Ages; he has questioned innumerable orbs, but never communed with the Bright and Morning Star; he is familiar with every flower which adorns the coronal of spring, but never owned the Rose of Sharon. Here is the worst of ignorance—here is an insanity which the holiest spirits mourn. Is not such a man laying up wrath against the day of

wrath? Will not every rock, every star, every flower, every law of nature, become an avenging force, and smite the man who spent a life in God's temple without even knowing that God delighted in loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment? It *must* be so. The universe is in sympathy with its Creator, and having given up enough for the safety and joy of the good, all the rest would flame into a hell rather than the neglecters of God should be living witnesses that the throne of judgment has been abandoned.

The whole subject, then, may be comprehended in four points.

First. *God brands all false glorying.* Upon the head of wisdom, power, and wealth, he writes, "Let no man glory in these." There is a wisdom which is folly; there is a power which is helplessness; there is a wealth which is poverty. God warns us of these things, so that if our boasted wisdom answer us not when we are on the Carmel of solemn encounter between light and darkness, we may not have God to blame; so that if our power crumble away in the day of battle, we may remember the divine communication; so that if our wealth be scorned in the extremities of our want, we may hear the voice which branded it as a false security! Each—wisdom, power, wealth—has its place,—each is precious,—each, properly employed,

is beneficial; but when substituted for God, the avenging fire falls upon them, and our defences are reduced to dust.

Second. *God has revealed the proper ground of glorying.* That ground is knowledge of God, not only as Creator and Monarch, but as Judge, and Saviour, and Father. *Reason*, groping her way through the thickening mysteries of creation, may exclaim, "There is a God," but *faith* alone can see the FATHER smiling through the King. It will be in vain to say, "Lord, Lord," if we cannot add, "Saviour, Friend:" men do not enter heaven because they have seen the shadow of the Sovereign, but because they have embraced, and loved, and served the Saviour.

Third. *God, having declared moral excellence to be the true object of glorying, has revealed how moral excellence may be attained.* Do you plead that there is no mention of Jesus Christ in the text? I answer, that loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, are impossibilities apart from Christ; they are only so many *names* to us, until Jesus exemplifies them in His life, and makes them accessible to us by His death and resurrection. Do you require the sun to be labelled ere you confess that he shines in the heavens? As life, animal and plantal, is impossible without the sun, so are loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment impossible without Christ: the proof is found in the experience



of humanity in all ages ; all philosophers who know not Jesus might be summoned to attest the validity of the declaration. It is, then, through Christ, and through Christ alone, that we attain the celestial altitudes of mercy, and righteousness, and judgment.

Fourth. *God has revealed the objects in which He glories Himself.* "For in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Let it be propounded as a problem—"In *what* will the Supreme Mind most delight?" and let it be supposed that an answer is possible, it might be concluded that the attainment of that answer would for ever determine the aspirations, the resolution, and the ambition of the world. We might consider that every other object would be infinitely beneath the pursuit, and infinitely unworthy of the affections of man. At all events, *this* must be true, that they who glory in the objects which delight Jehovah must be drinking at pure and perennial streams.

The voice of the text is—*glory in goodness.* "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." All goodness is centred there! That cross is the sublimest revelation of infinite wisdom—the most magnificent embodiment of infinite love. Have you been led into its mystery? Can you trace the meaning of the superscription? Can you catch the significance of the phenomena? Have you touched the flowing blood?

Have you flung the arms of your love around the holy sufferer? If you answer *Yes*, you are the true children of wisdom—the heirs of unwaning light. Pursue science—conquer creation—lay nature at your feet; but remember that to know everything but Jesus Christ is nothing but thinly-disguised and ruinous insanity.

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*(Preached at the time of the Meeting of the British Association in Manchester, Sept. 8, 1861.)*

SECRET THINGS.

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"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."  
—DEUT. xxix. 29.

THE "secret" and the "revealed;" these are distinct though related divisions of proprietorship. The one division belongeth unto the Lord our God, the other unto men and their children for ever.

At the very basis, then, of all our inquiries should be found this fact,—THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN DOMAINS OF THOUGHT AND GOVERNMENT ACCESSIBLE TO NONE BUT GOD.

Though on the one hand this fact circumscribes human inquiry, yet on the other it gives intensity to concentration, and a practical value to research.

I have said that the "secret" and the "revealed," though distinct, are yet related ; and it is important to remember this, inasmuch as God's seal of secrecy is often found in the very midst of things that are apparently wholly revealed. One would say, *e.g.*, that nature is a full revelation ; that the heavens and the earth are books wide open ; that there is no law of trespass in the outer creation. But facts

show us that there are many doors in nature not yet opened to the appeals of science. It hath pleased God to mark many doors as "private;" to write over many a radiant portal, "secret things."

There is, then, a law of secrecy even in the apparently open and unwatched fields of nature. Inquiry is circumscribed. There is a limit to the "ask, seek, knock" of all investigation. Not only in what is distinctively called prayer, but in all intellectual research, is this law fundamental,— "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Emphatic importance attaches to this fact. We imagine that prayer and spiritual benefits, exclusively so designated, are alone comprehended under the injunction, "Ask, and it shall be given you," whereas experience demonstrates that that simple law is at the very root and core of progress of every kind. "Ask, and it shall be given you," is as truly a canon in science as it is a law in religion. It is written alike in the bible of nature and the Bible of the gospel. It is written as distinctly on the heavens and the earth as on the solemn temple and the mystic altar. And so, indeed, with many other of the laws of the holy book. When the ages shall give birth to the seer, who shall have, in all its fulness and vigour, the faculty of interpretation, he will teach us that science and gospel stand on the

same basis, and that the one serveth the other as the younger the firstborn.

There is a man learned in star-writing. The heavens are the pages, the worlds are the words, the systems are the sentences which he attempts to decipher. And many a brilliant paragraph he succeeds in interpreting. But how did he attain his wisdom? Why, by the old gospel plan—"ask, seek, knock;" by patience, oft severely tried; by labour, that brought sore weariness; by perseverance, often toilworn,—by this method he became a successful translator of the heavens. Thus, that which is called cant in religion is called philosophy in science. Every time he turned an inquiring glance on the flaming firmament, he actually stood in the attitude of mute prayer. Every time he pointed his telescope to the kindling glories of nocturnal empire he was asking, seeking, knocking. Every attempt he made to arrest the chariots of fire that travel for ever around the King's throne, he was uttering the suppliant voice of his heart; and every true record which he entered upon his map was, in reality, an answer to his prayer.

And thus all through science. The man who interrogates a plant, and would charm it into an unbosoming of its secret; who asks it questions regarding its lineage, and subjects it to impertinent and cruel analysis, is a man who asks, seeks, knocks. The man who dissects the human body with a view

of eliciting from the dead what he never could learn from the living, asks, seeks, knocks. These men, however, do not use this form of phraseology in describing their pursuits. They say they are studying, botanizing, anatomizing, whereas they know not that in truth they are praying. Why, sirs, we could not read a line upon the floral leaflet if the untiring hand did not hold the light for us. We could not read the book of the stars if God did not turn over the pages. Yet men curl the lip of scorn at yonder infatuated saint, who on his knees is praying. They call his spiritual service "cant" and "hypocrisy," not knowing, in their learned Atheism, that they themselves are suppliants at another side of the same throne.

The practical point to be kept in view is this :— Though Almighty God encourages man to ask, seek, and knock; though He has made man an inquisitive and a progressive being; though He has endowed man with faculties, instincts, capacities, that yearn to transcend these minor spheres, and free themselves from the encumbrances of an enslaving flesh, yet human ambition is to be regulated by divine law, and to veil its eager eyes before the blazing splendours of the higher circles, into which admission is not yet permitted.

From nature to Providence the transition is easy, and in the providential realm the seal of privacy is not far to seek. No man can find out the work

that doeth from the beginning to the end. We cannot see how God interposes in every combination, and rounds off every detail. We see something of Him in the majesty of the heavens, but are baffled by the minuteness which makes the dewdrop as perfect a sphere as the vastest planet that burns in the canopy. In the every-day affairs of life, God is constantly interposing. He hath beset us behind and before, and laid His hand upon us. We cannot understand God's government of men. How should we? "We are of yesterday, and know nothing." Can the rustic civilian follow the rapid and brilliant manœuvres of the veteran warrior, whose nod sways an army? Can your infant comprehend the shallowest mystery of your domestic government? Would you appeal to the deaf for an estimate of the harmonious blending of certain sounds? How, then, should we, who are unlearned travellers through a world so changeful, attempt to arraign the divine procedure, and determine the interpretation of its hidden purposes?

Yes, wonderful are the hidings of the divine intent. You laid your plan, you boldly prognosticated a bright future, you saw light gleaming out of every line, and beauty blushing around every footprint, yet an invisible hand overturned your glittering temple, and ploughed up its deep foundations. In walking down the highway you unwittingly changed sides; you knocked at the wrong door when in

quest of your friend; in sorting your correspondence for the post, you mismatched some of the letters and envelopes; or you had long set your heart on a certain journey, and had made much patient preparation for it, but on the appointed morning you were under the grasp of an overmastering disease. You could not understand these things. Some of them were so simple as apparently to have no meaning, and others were so harsh as to be apparently malignant. But time disclosed the golden band by which all these circumstances, simple and complex, were linked to the eternal throne. You were amazed that events so trivial could have shrouded purposes so great, and that afflictions so cruel should have lain at the very threshold of the kingdom of God. But the Great Worker disdains nothing. He holds everything at high value. A dewdrop may reflect a planet. An atom may be necessary to the completion of a temple. As out of so common a thing as the dust of the earth God fashioned the magnificent temple of manhood, so out of the ordinary trivialities of life He moulds the stupendous realities of destiny. You say that you cannot understand these things; I answer, It is quite unnecessary that you should. Understand as much as God intended you to understand, and leave the rest. What do you do when, in reading the massive folios of ancient English authors, you meet passages written in an unknown tongue? Para-



graph after paragraph you read with all possible fluency, instantly apprehending the author's purpose ; but suddenly the writer throws before you a handful of Latin or a handful of Greek ; what then ? If you are absorbed by the interest of the book, you eagerly look out for the next paragraph in English, and continue your pursuit of the leading thought. Do likewise with God's wondrous Providence-book. Much of it is written in your own tongue—in large-lettered English, so to speak,—read that ; master its deep significance, and leave the passages of unknown language until you are farther advanced in the rugged literature of life—until you are older and better scholars in God's probationary school. The day of interpretation will assuredly come. A beam will strike right through the baffling mystery. Meantime, there should be sweet rest in the reflection that "secret things belong unto the Lord our God."

Nor have we far to go until we confront the deeper secrets of redemption. "Great is the mystery of godliness." All the mysteries of nature and providence are but as the riddles of childhood compared with the all-absorbing problem of the atonement. The cross is the meeting-place of the highest intelligences. Seraph and cherub fold their wings, and sit in wonder within the shadow of the "shameful tree." Pilate's superscription, in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, we can decipher ; but the

writing of that other hand—mayhap the hand that wrote on Belshazzar's proud walls—that hand so awfully distinct, yet so rapid, so delicate, as to be “something between a thought and a thing,”—the writing of that other we cannot read in all the depth and scope of its significance. The hoariest wisdom looks on and wonders; sages with wrinkled brow look on and wonder; and even angels desire to look into these dark developments of love.

But though mysteries culminate in the cross, yet there is enough revealed in the cross for man's present pardon, and his final enfranchisement in heavenly immortality. The secret things are not ours,—the revealed things are. We have not so much to do with the top of the ladder which is lost in the effulgence of the heavens, as with the foot of it which resteth on the earth; nor have we so much to do with the bright angel ministrants who throng it, as with the messages of mercy and hymns of hope which escape their tuneful lips. Fool is he who, in running from a town in flames, will not cross the river until he speculates concerning the architecture of the bridge, and makes inquiry into the origin and the date of its building. “Speed away from the pursuing flame,” say you; “tarry not until you are far beyond its range, and afterwards, if you please, discuss your speculations concerning the bridge.” The illustration

may be applied to the sinner who wishes to escape from his sin. His first business is to reduce to practice all that he does understand, to manifest a disposition to accept all the arrangements of divine wisdom, and in childlike trust to give himself up to God. The cross has a side that is "secret," and a side that is "revealed"—a side that shines towards God, and a side that shines towards a sinning world. It lights the heavens as well as the earth, but man's whole business now is to accept the beam which falls upon himself, and in its light to penetrate his way to the higher and better spheres.

This, then, is our fundamental point, viz., that there are certain domains of thought and government accessible to none but God. An additional remark is this :—

IMPENETRABLE SECRECY IS COMPATIBLE WITH  
PATERNAL BENEVOLENCE.

We have come to associate secrecy with selfishness; nor is the association destitute of logical and moral sequence, when looked at in the twilight of mere human experience. Yet all nature proves that in the divine administration, impenetrable secrecy may co-exist with paternal benevolence. As rapidly as you point me to the mystery, I can point you in return to the fatherhood. Do you say that God keeps to Himself the mystery of the sun? I answer, He turns upon you the

full revelation of the light. Does He keep in His own breast the secret of germination? See! He gives you the revelation of golden harvests; the Spring kept the secret in her heart, but Autumn poured her largess at your feet! Enough is kept back to prove the power, enough is given to establish the mercy. It is right, it is necessary, that the father should know more than the child. And is the father less a father because of this superior knowledge? Is not his very superiority of knowledge one of his highest qualifications for discharging the duties of paternity? Mystery is the seal of the Infinite. If you are clinging to parchment which you call your title-deeds to heaven, I pronounce it invalid, illegal, worthless, if this seal be absent. All through, from Eden's word of hope to Calvary's cry, "It is finished," and Bethany's "Go ye into all the world," all through, I say, "great is the mystery of godliness." Yet benevolence guides man round the base of the dread mount of mystery. Guides man! You have seen an old man tottering with the gathered infirmities of a weary lifetime, and wandering in darkness on which no summer sun could shed the light of morning: blind! blind from his birth! never saw God's outer robe of many colours; never saw God's shadowed outline—his own mother's face! You have seen such a man, led along the thronged highway by a little child, to whose young, bright

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eyes he committed himself in hope and faith. I am that poor blind wanderer through the way of God's mysteries, and that little guide represents the benevolence, the mercy, the tenderness, with which God leads me from horizon to horizon, until I stand amid the encircling glories of the perfect revelation. The commonest mercy of the day-time flames up into a fire-guide, that lights me through the gloom and trouble of the night.

The speculative thinker looks at the mystery and forgets the benevolence. *The very wealth of God makes us covetous.* Does poverty provoke envy? We look not so much at what God has given, as at what He might have given. We read the love through the mystery, rather than the mystery through the love. Men like to peer into the hidden. They flatter it, they exalt it, they say, "It is good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise;" and having wrought themselves up into this delusive appreciation of its value, they put forth the thievish hand, and the fancied blessing turns to a scorpion's sting!

Do not anticipate your course of study. The volumes will be given, by the great Librarian, one by one. Understand what you can, and in doing it you will increase in knowledge; understand that in all the wastes of folly there can be no greater fool than he who will not believe his

Father's telegram, because he cannot understand the mystery of the telegraph.

DIVINE SECRECY IS NO PLEA FOR HUMAN DIS-OBEDIENCE. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." In these words we have,—

1. *An acknowledgment of a divine revelation*,—"Those things which are revealed."

2. *A definition of the relationship in which God stands to human kind*,—"All the words of this law." Law? Then God is our lawgiver. All the moral institutes issue from His wisdom. There is one lawgiver. All that man lays down as law is, so far as it is right, but a modification or interpretation of God's own word of government. When I ask for evidences of God's existence, wisdom, and power, men point me to all the host of heaven, and say that these glittering letters proclaim the majesty of the Most High. True. Yet in such a word as, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," I find a more satisfying testimony to Christ's Godhead than in all the wonders of His physical empire. I like to read the revelation of His hand, but better far the revelation of His heart. I am awe-struck when the sea-storm pauses in its wrath like a chidden child, but thrilled with a holier, tenderer ecstasy when the wild heart calls

Him, in sweet submission and loving loyalty, Lord and God !

3. *A distinct recognition of man's power to obey the law*,—"That we may DO all the words." Religion has, indeed, its contemplative side, but also its sterner side of action. The architect supplies the builder with the plan of the mansion ; all the great lines are there, and all the lines of detail,—every angle, every curve, every combination. For what purpose does the architect supply the plan ? Let us see. The builder takes the elaborate drawing, admires it, frames it in gold, hangs it in his chief room, and points it out to every guest ! Was that the purpose for which the drawing was supplied ? Has not the architect good reason to be angry and indignant ? The builder may have shown great admiration of the plan, and may even have done it some little honour,—but where is the *mansion* ? So have we done with God's holy "law." We have published it in letters of gold ; we have bound it in richest morocco ; genius, art, taste, have conspired to beautify, and adorn, and decorate the sacred book ; but *where is the mansion of a noble, majestic, holy, and perfected manhood* ? We received the law that we might "do" it ; having failed in that, our admiration is hypocrisy, and our loudest applause a thundered lie !

No longer regard divine secrecy as a plea for

human disobedience. The statute book is the judgment book. Every day is a day of judgment. Any man may now tell whether he is brightening into an angel, or darkening and shrivelling into a devil.

INQUISITIVENESS INTO SECRET THINGS WILL NECESSARILY PRODUCE GREAT UNREST. I must leave this point without expansion.

The practical comfort to all saints is this, "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." Hope is not cut off, it is merely deferred. There shall be a breaking of the sun through all heavy, sullen, threatening clouds. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." What hope rings in this word of promise! "When that which is perfect is come," is the thrilling chorus to the song of the Christian's life-long toil. He sings it in the morning light, when the unknown and untraversed day calls him to its companionship; he sings it under the glitter of the evening star, when the mistakes and mischances of the day are all reminding him that he knows only "in part." He lifts his wet and swollen eyes from many a spoiled page, and says with a sob of distress, yet a tone of struggling gladness, "When that which is perfect is come." He recovers himself from many a paroxysm of ungodly passion, and takes heart at the words, "When that which



is perfect is come." He pillows his aching head upon this promise, knowing that the morning of revelation and completeness is advancing. This is our duty. We do the law ; we leave the mystery and we rest in a hope which brings no shame !

## LETTER TO EPHESUS.

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“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”—REV. ii. 1—7.

I. THE Head of the church has a minute knowledge of all the services of His people.

First. There is distinguished *labour*. “I know thy works, and thy labour.” The church at Ephesus had been a working church. It had been operating on the surrounding regions of depravity, darkness,

and death. In its early life it was eminently an aggressive church. For my own part, I would have Christ's church as ambitious as Alexander. As he waved his battle-flag over a conquered world, so would I that the church might unfurl the banner of a nobler conquest over every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue.

Second. There is distinguished *patience*. The "patience" is twice referred to. This patience may be understood as indicating long-suffering in relation to those by whom the saints in Ephesus were surrounded—long-suffering, both in waiting for the germination of the seed which they had sown in many tears, and in the meek endurance of fiery trials. God specially marked this excellence. This meekness of love was known to the Head of the church; and this suffering in silence was as acceptable as a thousand songs. The point to be noted here is, that Christ is mindful not only of the outward manifestations of the spiritual life—such as many labours and many offerings,—but also of the hidden graces which cluster round the heart. He sees not only the moral warrior brandishing his sword in the thickest of the battle, but also the wounded and suffering soldier; and sweetly says to such, "I know thy patience." We are too prone to attach high value exclusively to the conspicuous, the declarative, the many-tongued: we must, indeed, prize these as necessary in the assertion

and maintenance of great principles ; but let us never forget that, what garlands and diadems soever may adorn the heads of the great leaders in moral actions, there is a brilliant crown on the brow of holy, much-enduring, silent patience. It is often easier to fight than to *be patient*. This backwardness in having patience may be seen not only in the higher ranges of christian life, but in the lower levels of philanthropic service. If it fall to your lot, for example, to sit through the cheerless day and the dreary night with a loved one who is in the grasp of a fell disease, many friends will offer to join you, if, as they say, they can be of any *use* : but what do they mean by being of "*use*" ? Often they mean merely so long as they can be *actively engaged* : keep them in an excited state of action, and all will be well. But how few can quietly and reverently sit still, and watch in loving and hopeful patience the placid countenance of silent suffering ! How few can tone themselves to the high strength of doing everything by doing nothing ! Patience is undervalued by an excited world ; but Jesus notes it in its long vigils, marks it trimming its dim lamp in the solemn midnight, and sweetly whispers His word of commendation, which is always invigorating as the breath of immortality.

Third. There is distinguished *jealousy for the right*. "Thou canst not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried them which say they are

apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." It must ever be remembered that there is a spurious charity. It is morally impossible that Christians and anti-Christians can have any sympathetic fellowship. Can trumpet blast be clearer than this?—"What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The Head of the church applauds the saints in Ephesus because they "could not bear them which are evil." There is, indeed, large scope for the exercise of christian charity, and it is sometimes difficult to determine where her loving streams shall pause; but there is a "hitherto" even to the tides of charity. Woe unto the church when moral distinctions are lightly regarded! To confound light with darkness, sweetness with bitterness, is to mock the first principles of holy government, and to destroy for ever the possibility of holy brotherhood. While, therefore, we would not presumptuously ascend the judgment-seat, we believe it is impossible to burn in too deeply the line which separates the sympathy of compassion from the sympathy of complacency.

Fourth. There was distinguished *persistence in*

*the right course.* "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." In a church correctly described by such language there may have been extraordinary fortitude, and this fortitude has been attended with singular joyousness and cordiality. The eulogium might be read thus:—"I know thy labour, and yet thou dost not labour, *i. e.*, thou dost not make a labour of thy duties:" in their case duty was not a hard taskmaster. There was such a sunny joyousness and musical cordiality about these saints, that they came to their work—work so hard—with the freshness of morning, and under their touch duty was transformed into privilege. There is a lesson here for christian workers through all time. Some men have the most unhappy art of turning every service they render into hard toil. When work is done with the hand only, it is invariably attended with much constraint and difficulty; but when the *heart* is engaged, the circle of duty is run with a vigour that never wearies and a gladness which never saddens. Not only so, the Ephesian saints eminently succeeded in uniting patience with perseverance. They were not only patient in suffering, but patient in labour. They did not expect the morning to be spring and the evening to be autumn, but, having due regard to the plan of divine procedure, combined in wise proportions the excitement of war

with the patience of hope. Among ministers in particular I have noticed two evils in the matter of exercising patience,—some exercising it too little, and others exercising it too much. A young minister, fired with an heroic enthusiasm, expects to extinguish the devil and his angels in the first twelve months of his ministry; and because at the end of that period the devil and his angels are just as lively and prosperous as ever, he throws up his pastorate and seeks a new battle-ground. An old minister, to whom the vision has long been closed, and the testimony sealed, who has not a new idea to present, can keep his hold of the property as though he could convince the very pews of sin, and turn the very lamps into saints. Both err. There is something fundamentally wrong in each case; yet not so far wrong in the impetuosity as in the obstinacy. The Ephesians were right: they blended persistence with patience, and were extolled by Him who knew the hardest toil, and exemplified the most uncomplaining endurance. The fundamental point is, that Christ knew all this. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." Though our Head is in heaven, not a service rendered in His name escapes His benignant notice. There is not a toiler in the vineyard on whose bent form the

Master looks not with approbation. He sees the sufferer also. All that He observes influences His mediation, so that in every age "He tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb."

Such is the opening of the letter. It opens as with the noise of many waters. Here is a very cataract of eulogium. The bounding waters flash back the light of yonder countenance, and the very spray dances into rainbows. I would fain linger here. There is a "nevertheless" before me which I would gladly escape; but duty calls for the unwelcome second point, viz.,—

II. That the Head of the church marks every declension of piety,—“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee; because thou hast left thy first love.” Let me draw your special attention to the manner in which this “nevertheless” is introduced. In the first instance, Jesus acknowledges, with most ample commendation, all the good deeds which had been done by the church. He gathers all the bright and beautiful flowers of service and suffering, and having wreathed these into a garland, places it upon the head of the church, and then gently whispers,—so low, methinks, that no enemy could overhear,—“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.” This method of reproof is eminently suggestive. It gives a lesson to parents. Would you be successful in reproofing your children? Let commendation precede rebuke; let your “never-



theless" be winged with love and hope, and it will fly to the farthest boundary of your child's intellectual and moral nature, and a thousand blessings will be shaken from those heavenly wings. It gives a lesson to pastors also. Our words of remonstrance or rebuke will be more successful as they are preceded by every acknowledgment which justice and generosity can suggest. When the Master is compelled, so to speak, to rebuke His church, He proceeds as though He would gladly turn. The rebuke comes with a hesitation which did not mark the eulogy. He resorts to a negative form of statement—"Thou hast left thy first love." He charges His church with a lowering of moral temperature; the ardour and brightness of early love have waned. Paul is clear enough in his statement to Timothy that part of a minister's duty is to "reprove" and "rebuke." A difficult part for any man to undertake. A rebuke may be given with so rash and vengeful a tone as to create disgust and resentment in the offender; or it may be uttered with so grieved and trembling a love as will melt obduracy into penitence. Rebuke is to be distinguished from coarse and brutal scolding; it is not to be uttered with the frantic blare of trampled dignity, but with the solemn pathos of wounded affection. Jesus weeps even while He rebukes, and those sad tears carry the reproving word to the innermost fibres of the heart.

Look at the declension spoken of. First. This declension is described as having begun in the heart. Christ does not charge the saints at Ephesus with having changed their doctrinal views ; but, placing His finger on the heart, says, "There is a change here." You know the enthusiasm of "first love." Love is blind to difficulties. She bounds up the steepes with alacrity and joy. She cannot be deterred from her purposes by any representation. Tell her of the river, and she answers, "I can swim;" remind her of awful precipices, the guardian walls of capacious and terrific sepulchres, and, spreading her golden pinions, she replies, with laughter, "I can fly;" tell her of burning deserts, on which no palm-tree throws its shade, through which no river rolls, and her courage bursts into uncontrollable enthusiasm as she recounts the story of her past endurances. She burns up every excuse. She calls every land her home. "The range of the mountains is her pasture." "She rejoiceth in her strength; she goeth to meet the armed men; she mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth she back from the sword." A right royal force is this "first love." If any work is to be done in the church—if any difficulties are to be surmounted—if any icebergs are to be dissolved—if any cape, where savage seas revel in ungovernable madness, is to be rounded, send out men and women in

whose hearts this "first love" burns and sings, and their brows will be girt with garlands of conquest. Our business, then, is to watch our heart-fires. When the temperature of our love lowers, there is cause for terror. It is instructive to mark the many and insidious influences by which the gush and swell of affection are modified. Take the case of an admirer of his minister, and mark how the stream of love subsides. In the first instance, such an admirer thought that his teacher would ever play the harp of comfort or busy himself with abstract doctrines; but he finds that he has miscalculated—that his minister is master of many styles—that his pulpit is now a green hill, down which silvery streams roll, and in their rolling bid the traveller drink and be glad—and that anon his pulpit is an Etna, whose sides shake with surging billows of fire, and whence issue devouring flames; he finds that his minister can not only sing the sweet, soft songs of love and hope, but can command a sarcasm before which vice grows pale, and staggers with amazement,—that he carries a sword which has cloven many a vaunting foe. In course of time the admirer cannot bear this. The minister is dealing too faithfully with his conscience. The man knows that he has broken both the tables of the law, and now that he is being smitten with the avenging stones, he decries the minister who was once his idol, and his

fickle love is turned into another channel. Long ago a drum-headed lad said to me, "Your sermons make my head ache;" but he has never looked at me with a smile since I asked him whether that was the fault of my sermons or of his own head. Or take the case of one who has been distinguished for much service in the cause of God, and see how the fires pale. He becomes prosperous in business. His oblations on the altar of Mammon are costlier than ever. He toils in the service of self until his energies are nearly exhausted, and then his class in the school is neglected; the grass grows on his tract district; his nature has become so perverted that he almost longs for an occasion of offence, that he may retire from the duties of the religious life. Could you have heard him in the hour of his new-born joy, when he first placed his foot in God's kingdom, you could not have thought that ever he had been reduced to so low a moral temperature. What holy vows escaped him! How rich he was in promise! He was like a fruit tree in the sunny spring-time, perfectly white with ten thousand blossoms, and passers-by prophesied that every branch would be laden with luscious fruit. But look at him now; turn the leaves over, and with eager eyes search for fruit, and say, is the promise of spring redeemed in autumn? Innumerable influences are continually in operation, which would cool the ardour of our first enthusi-

asm for Christ. Satan plies us with a thousand treacherous arts; the world allures us with a thousand transitory charms; our inborn depravity reveals itself in a thousand varying manifestations; pride and selfishness, ambition and luxury, appeal to us in a thousand voices, and beckon us with a thousand hands. Let men of rich, deep, manifold experience tell me how difficult it is to nourish and maintain our pristine love for Jesus, and how essential it is to fight our battles on our knees if we would keep our treasured love safe from the grasp of the arch-plunderer of the universe.

Second. This declension may be accompanied by an inveterate hatred of theological heresy,—“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.” The Nicolaitanes held corrupt doctrines, and indulged in corrupt practices, hence the divine Head commends the church at Ephesus for protesting against such depravity; the point, however, on which we remark is, that while the saints were thus earnest in repelling a false theology, their own love for Jesus and His service was waning. The head may be right while the heart is going in a wrong direction. I am indeed anxious that we should maintain a scriptural theology, that we should “hold fast the form of sound words;” at the same time we must remember that a technical theology will never save the soul; and that a mere verbal creed will never

protect and increase our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is right to denounce heresy. We are bound by our covenant with Jesus to resist the devil, in what guise soever he may reveal himself. But beware, lest while you are hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes your love is decreasing. It is not enough that you are able to put ten thousand heretics to flight; you must watch your love-fires, and continually supply them with the fuel of heaven.

Third. This declension evoked the most solemn warnings and exhortations,—“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Observe the terrible consequences of heart alienation. These solemn words show (1) that the church in its collected capacity may incur the divine displeasure. There may be good individuals in the fellowship, yet the community as a whole may be under the frown of Him who “walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” (2) That the church in its collective capacity must betake itself to repentance. This is evident when we remember that there is certain work properly denominated church work. Take, for example, either home or foreign evangelization. It is not my work solely as an individual to “go up and possess the land” of heathenism; but it is our work as a

church to carry the light of heaven into "the dark places of the earth." It can only be done by individuals, in so far as they are atoms in a fabric—parts of a whole. If, therefore, we have neglected to enter the door of opportunity as a church, the cry of the angry Saviour is, "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly."

(3) That Jesus will unchurch every organization that is unfaithful to His name; He threatens to "remove thy candlestick out of his place." Such language may well make us pause. Organization is not spiritual brotherhood. Tell me not of gorgeous temples, of skilful arrangements, of complete machinery; I tell you that you may have all these in an unparalleled degree, and yet "Ichabod" may be written on your temple doors! What is your spiritual life? Is your ecclesiastical mechanism the expression of your love? Is every wheel revolving by the breath of your sympathy? Is your heart the great motive power? I would turn you in upon yourselves, and in the name of Jesus adjure you to judge your hearts. Do this *now*,—not a moment is to be lost; you may lose your "candlestick," you may be unchurched, and your temple may become a pit for "the bittern and the owl to dwell in." My brethren, we must determine our condition in the light of these assurances. The eye of Jesus is marking every declension; and as our love declines, His anger burns. There is a limit to

His forbearing meekness. Those that continue to offend Him shall assuredly "lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit;" and when He ariseth in His fury the earth shall stagger with amazement, and the sea shall retire from His presence. Oh, Church! hear the warning cry.

We must not part without a word of hope: Jesus concludes His letter with words which warrant us in affirming,—

III. That the Head of the church has the richest blessings in reserve for all who overcome their spiritual enemies. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Almost every word in this promise is an idea:—

"*Overcometh*"—the word tells of battle and victory. There is intimation here of an enemy. There is a hell in this word, and in it there is a devil. That your spiritual life is a fight you need not be reminded: every day you are in the battle-field; you live by strife.

"*Eat*"—the word tells of appetite. Desire is in this word, and desire satisfied. Our desire for more of God shall increase as the ages of our immortality expire, and yet increasing desire is but another way of saying increasing satisfaction.

"The tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." These words are old; they ring in my ear as familiar sounds, and such they are; for hardly can we overpass the first page of the



Bible, until we read of "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden," and now that we come to the last pages, again we hear the rustling of its amaranthine leaves. It is but little we can say concerning such a tree: no worm is gnawing at its root, no serpent coils around its stem, no sere leaf trembles upon it as the prophet of a coming winter, its every leaf is jewelled with purer dew than ever sparkled on the eyelids of the morning. A tree! 'Tis but another word for beauty, for beauty walks forth in ever-varying manifestations. A tree! 'Tis but another name for progress, for the circling sap bears through every fibre life and fruitfulness. Brethren, shall we assemble round that central tree? We cannot do so until we have assembled round the Cross. The Cross is at once our tree of death and our tree of life; nay, the Cross is but the earthly name of yonder tree in heaven; the Cross is that tree in dreary winter, shaken by savage storms, reft of every leaf, the throne of all-conquering death; and *yonder* tree is but the Cross in the genial summer of the better land, bursting into leaf, blushing into blossom, struggling into fruit; and I tell you that you can never stand beneath its branches until you have touched it in its old name—the Cross! the Cross! and having done so, you shall by-and-by approach the eternal tree, and you shall eat its precious fruit, and that fruit will be all the better for having been plucked and offered by your Brother's hand.

THE TWO MINISTRATIONS.

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"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."—2 Cor. iii. 9.

WHAT is the meaning of the expression, "ministration of condemnation"? The answer is in the seventh verse of the chapter, "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance ; which glory was to be done away ;"—whence it is obvious that the phrase "ministration of condemnation" relates to the law which Moses received amid the pomp and majesty of Sinai. That law is also called "the ministration of death." The Apostle is presenting a contrastive view of two systems under which it has pleased God to develop and test moral life ; hence those systems are antithetically designated "the ministration of death," and "the ministration of the Spirit," as also "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of righteousness." As the method of argument is entirely antithetical and contrastive, the definition of one term suggests the definition of the other ; so

that, as "the ministration of condemnation" signifies the law which came by Moses, so "the ministration of righteousness" signifies the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The simple form of the text, consequently, is this—"If the law of Moses be glory, much more doth the gospel of Christ exceed in glory."

1. Why should the law be described as "the ministration of death" or "the ministration of condemnation"? Are not the terms unnecessarily harsh? Do they not suggest a false idea of the dignity of law? My first object is to defend a negative answer to this inquiry. The very fact of penal law being established presupposes either power or disposition to do that which is wrong. Not only so; it is the peculiar function of penal law to define and abridge the so-called liberty of man. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." In delineating his spiritual life, in all its struggling and victories, through all phases which moral being could possibly assume, the Apostle gives us to understand how law operated in the settlement of his convictions and duties: "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The simplest of illustrations shall bring the meaning of the assertion, that law defines and limits liberty, within the comprehension of a child. For a length of time you have been in the habit of regarding certain fields as common property; again

and again you have struck your course across them to shorten or vary a journey. You were totally indifferent as to their proprietorship. The idea that you were trespassing never occurred to you. So far as you knew, there was no law whatever in the case. In process of time, however, the proprietor determines to assert his right to his own land. With this end in view, he gives public intimation that all persons found upon his property will be dealt with as trespassers. He proclaims a law. He sets up in his field a ministration of condemnation. From that hour the whole question of your liberty undergoes a fundamental change. The altered circumstances compel all who have been in the habit of traversing the land with impunity to say, in effect, "In this case we had not known transgression, except the law had said, Thou shalt not trespass." Yet why should the law be designated "the ministration of condemnation" and "the ministration of death"? When the law is based on rectitude, what possible relation can it sustain to death or condemnation? The terms, though severe, are distinguished by the precisest accuracy. *All* punishment stands on the plane of death. Death, absolutely so called, is the *ultimate* penalty; but the very gentlest blow, nay, the very shadow of a frown, is death in incipency; that is to say, it belongs to the kingdom of death, and not in any sense to the kingdom of life; death is in the penalty as truly as the plant is

in the seed. The judge who imprisons a criminal for a month or even for a day, gives that "criminal *as much* of death as the nature of the offence is deemed to require. Why, what *is* death? You say that a man is dead when his heart *ceases* to throb. I tell you that a man may be dead even while his heart is beating with the vigour of perfect health! The hardened wretch who climbed the scaffold with a smile, and swung across the invisible barrier with a curse on his curled lip, is not, if the expression be allowed, half so dead as the fair young creature on whose cheek there burns the memorial of a first disgrace. The death I speak of is a question of moral consciousness. The physical heart continues its travels, but the better heart which it enshrines withers and dies.

That law is correctly designated "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of death," may be shown by another simple illustration. Let me suppose that as heads of houses you had not for a long time felt the necessity of requiring all the members of your households to be at home by a fixed hour. Had they returned at seven, eight, or nine, they would have been received with equal cordiality. In the working of your family life, however, you find it necessary to determine an hour at which every child shall be with you. To that effect you proclaim your law. In process of events, I further suppose, one of your children is a mile off when the

well-known hour strikes. What is the consequence in his own experience? He hears stroke after stroke without alarm, until, alas! the legal hour is pealed off. How that stroke shakes him! how harsh the vibration! how reproachful the shivering tone! A week before, he could have heard the same hour strike, and could have sung to it. Nothing would have alarmed him. No ghostly accuser would have been upon his track. He now feels that the law is "the ministration of condemnation." He says, "I am late; I should have been at home; my father's eye will reprove me: I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known irregularity in time, except the law had said, Thou shalt be punctual."

Take the world's first case of law. There was law in the Edenic life. There was a "Thou shalt not" in the programme of the world's first experiment of manhood, and over it fell the shadow of threatened death. Liberty was made liberty by law. Up to the very moment of touching the forbidden fruit, Adam knew not what was meant by the "ministration of condemnation;" but the moment *after*, how vast his knowledge! The taste of that fruit could not be expelled from his mouth; it was there as a malignant poison, for which no plant in paradise held the cure; the very tree looked hell at him, and a leaf from its desecrated branches might have crushed him to the earth. Why all

this? The explanation is in the law. The law said nothing to Adam of "condemnation" until he had broken it. So long as he kept the law, he knew nothing of death, except by observation. What it was for *man* to die it was impossible he should know; but when the forbidden sap entered him, the inner man fell back blind, chilled, dead! Fools are they who cavil because Adam did not physically expire. Is life a question of perpendicularity? Is death a question of frozen marrow? Is manhood a question of bones? Every man knows the killing power of sin. In darkness you have done some deed of iniquity. The red mark of guilt is on the palm of your right hand. Your heart condemns you. When you come forward to the light, you feel yourself dead; your moral vitality is gone; your eye can no longer return the inquiring glance of society; you would knit your own shroud of fig leaves, and would gladly escape God as you seek to return to the dust. Ah! death is a process of the soul. Dead men walk on their own graves. The soul is in the chambers of death long ere the body yields up the ghost.

Another inquiry is now suggested. Under circumstances so appalling, how can "the ministration of condemnation" be said to be "GLORY"?—for *that* is the royal word of the text. What "glory" can there possibly be in "the ministration of *condemnation*" and "the ministration of *death*"? I answer,

the glory is not in the condemnation and the death, except in their immediate connection with law. That there is glory in law is open to decisive demonstration. The establishment of law implies authority on the part of the lawgiver. Law is the declared will of the superior. I wish it to be felt that this is true not only in the highest regions of legislation, but necessarily as true in the simplest relations of social life. How is it amongst ourselves? Does the servant give law to the master, or the master to the servant? By whose authority is the table of regulations put up in all your great hives of industry? The principle that authority is with the superior is essential to the consolidation and government of society. Relax it, and society is at once disorganized! We must be governed, and we must be governed by one another; and of necessity society will gravitate around its highest forces. I repeat, then, that law implies authority on the part of the lawgiver. Carry these illustrations forward to the case argued in the text, then the "glory" will at once kindle upon us, and, like the children of Israel, we shall need the protecting vail. Recall the dread days of Sinai. Almighty God alights, and the mountain shudders at His presence. There, amid thunderings and lightnings, the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of Infinite Wisdom are given to man, accompanied by an institutionalism as gorgeous as it is complex.



Every utterance of the eternal mind must have its own peculiar glory; alike the utterance designed to produce physical results, and the utterance intended to operate in the moral kingdom: each shines with a glory distinctively its own, and in proportion as the moral is superior to the physical, so does the glory of the one exceed the glory of the other. The Israelites were hemmed in by law. They were beset behind and before, and the hand of the legislator was laid upon them. When they turned to worship, there was a "Thou shalt" that exterminated all idols, and shut the worshipper in with one God. When they associated with families, there was a "Thou shalt" that demanded filial reverence. When they were thrown together in masses, there were regulations intended to preserve the integrity, and purity, and blessedness of the vast population. In such a law, brocaded with the most gorgeous ritualism, there must have been "glory." It was the utterance of the Infinite Intelligence. It marked a distinct epoch in the moral training of the world. It was a protest, in flame and blood, against every form of error. It declared, by more than implication, that there was an immense evil in the world, and that moral life among men was under the immediate scrutiny of God. That solemn law was a vital part of the education through which God was conducting the young and wayward world. That law was alike a standard of rectitude and a

prophecy of a judgment day. From the very beginning, man was given to understand that all things should converge to a great judicial crisis, and that whoso broke through the groundwork of divine law would find, when he reached the under side, that he had arrived in the unbottomed abyss of death ! Yea, there was nothing between man and death but the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of divine legislation ! Just *that*. There was but a step between man and death. When, therefore, I contemplate the dread issue of an infraction of God's law, I can understand the Apostle when he calls that law "the ministration of condemnation ;" and as I further contemplate the sublime purpose of that law, I can understand how, upon such a "ministration," there shone a "glory" which must have beamed from heaven !

2. The gospel is described as "the ministration of righteousness," and is affirmed to "exceed in glory." In giving the law, God did not accommodate Himself to human weakness by imposing easy or elastic conditions and regulations. He declared that which was absolute in rectitude. There was no tampering with righteousness. There was no shortening of the standard. You inquire, then, who could keep this rigorous, inflexible law ? Could apostate man rise to the required sublimity of obedience, and from the summit of an unimpeachable life take wing for the holy heavens ? The

answer is, *Never*. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Note this word "justified." Let me suppose that man could perfectly fulfil the law from this moment forward; I have then to ask, What is to be done with the life that is past, a life lived in hatred to that law? Granted, though the postulate is a moral impossibility, that from this instant man could pay "the uttermost farthing;" I demand who is to pay the accumulated arrears? Man can never do *more* than is right. He has no power to produce surplus virtue; so that, even granting, for the sake of clearness and emphasis, that man could henceforth fulfil the law in its most punctilious requirements, it remains to be explained how he is to atone for a life that has been prostituted to the devil. The Apostle pronounces upon the case with elaboration and authority: "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. iii. 11, 24). The law rendered supremely important service to man if it did nothing more than bring him to the consciousness that he was powerless to fulfil requirements so holy. The law showed him the height to which he must ascend, and he trembled, and owned his weakness. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." "The law is holy, and

the commandment holy, and just, and good." The law was not designed to give life. It had but a schoolmaster's work to do. It was preliminary and introductory ; "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." We see, then, that the law was not a final act in the development of the divine purpose ; it was not clothed with resurrectional or regenerative power ; it was a link in a chain ; it had to train the consciousness of the world to acknowledge its own utter weakness, for "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." There was an epoch of law ; there is now an epoch of faith. Faith is younger than law ; hence, "before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

As the law was antecedent to faith, so also it stands in perfect contrast ; the one being "the ministration of condemnation," the other "the ministration of righteousness." Yet what is meant by asserting that the law was antecedent to the gospel ? I mean antecedent merely in the order of open manifestation. The promise that Christ should come into the world takes precedence of all other promises : this is recognized by the Apostle in the argument of his Epistle to the Galatians,—  
"And this I say, that the covenant, that was con-

firmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. iii. 17). The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Far back in the infinite depths of unbeginning being, the atonement was the vital centre of God's moral plan in the re-creation of humanity. Merely, therefore, in the order of public disclosure was the law antecedent to the gospel. Love is from everlasting, law is but of yesterday; law is for a season, love is for ever; law is a transient flame, love an eternal orb. Sublime beyond full comprehension is the fact that the gospel is "the ministration of righteousness." Those who exercise repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are not merely pardoned; *that* would be much,—infinitely more, indeed, than the law could ever do,—but they are made *righteous*; they are cleansed; they are sanctified; they are transformed into the image of God. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Here is a work far beyond the range of law. Law could not enter the heart with purifying power. Law had no blood in its iron hand to apply to the depraved and guilty nature of man. It is impossible that law could forgive; law only can condemn. You may address the broken law, but will it speak

to you ? Will mercy ooze out of the iron letters in which it stands forth before your streaming eyes ? Never ! You must appeal from the law to the Law-giver. Only a *heart* can forgive ; therefore “ what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son [His own infinite heart] in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Here is the moral contrast in all its breadth. The law is weak, the gospel is mighty ; the law touches the outer man, the gospel penetrates the heart. “ The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did ; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

3. The ministration of righteousness exceeds the ministration of condemnation “ in glory.” This is in strict harmony with God’s general method of government. He never goes from the greater to the less, but ever from the less to the greater : “ He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” We thought nothing could exceed the splendour of Sinai, yet it was eclipsed by the transcendent magnificence of Calvary. We were amazed at the eminence of Moses, and the radiance of his transfigured face ; but “ we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We felt that human nature was honoured when Moses was called a “ servant ;” but “ beloved, now are we

the *sons* of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." When the law was announced, the people exclaimed in consternation, "Let not God speak to us any more, lest we die." But Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; He hath "come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly." The law was veiled under types and shadows; but the Son of God has been crucified before our eyes, and we are crucified with Christ: nevertheless we live; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us: and the life which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Is not the contrast perfect? Is not the glory of the first economy paled by the noontide splendour of the better dispensation? A question of infinite importance arises here. Did the law exceed the gospel in its condemnation of sin? You know the answer. I speak with trembling reverence in declaring that God could not have shown His infinite hatred of sin so clearly by any method as by giving His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to pour out His soul unto death. When I wish to understand how God regards sin, I do not look at the quivering slopes of Sinai; I do not listen to the thundering or to "the voice of words;" I steal away at midnight across the brook Cedron, and listen to the wail of sorrow that bursts from the breaking heart of the

lonely Redeemer ; I listen as He pleads for release, and then falls into filial resignation to His Father's will ; I watch Him up the "dolorous way ;" I see Him stretched on the accursed tree ; I hear His groan, and it makes my heart sore with unutterable grief ; I see the gushing blood, the quivering limbs, the languid eye, and hear the voice of despair amid the darkness of premature midnight—and in all this I come to apprehend that sin is the abominable thing that God hateth. The exceeding glory of the gospel, then, is seen in this,—that while it comes to condemn sin, it also comes to destroy its power, and save those whom it has brought into bondage. The gospel has no word of pity for sin, or of extenuation for error, but it melts with infinite compassion as it yearns over the sinner. The law never had a loving word for the transgressor—it was stern, inflexible, rigorous ; but the gospel speaks with entreating tenderness to erring man—offers him rest—offers him joy—offers him heaven. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus never temporizes with sin ; but who ever addressed the sinner in words so full of love, and mercy, and hope ? You have never seen Him spurn the vilest malefactor from His pierced feet. When such malefactor has gone up to the law, he has been met by thunder and lightning, and tempest and vengeance ; but when he has crept to the cross, Jesus has wept over



him, and offered him pardon, and peace, and righteousness. Does not, then, the ministration of the gospel "exceed in glory" the ministration of the law? So greatly does it exceed, that we may exclaim with the Apostle, "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." This method of working fills me not only with wonder, but with hope. It gives me a glimpse of what shall go forward during unending time. No more, indeed, shall there be need to interpose on account of sin; no hill in heaven shall be surmounted with the cross on which shall be outstretched an atoning Saviour; no more sin, no more sorrow, no more sacrifice; but still ever-expanding and ever-brightening revelations of the divine character; our knowledge shall increase, our love shall deepen, our strength shall strengthen, and heaven itself will be the last but inexhaustible expression of "the ministration of righteousness." We do well to think of heaven in this light. But for "the ministration of righteousness," heaven would have been inaccessible to man. The cross opened heaven on the side which darkened towards the earth. The Christian, therefore, does not cease his connection with the cross when he waves the signal of triumph over the last enemy. The ministration of righteousness does not terminate at the grave; it stretches across the troubled river of death; and when the believer

enters heaven he instantly joins the song of honour, and power, and blessing, to "the Lamb that was slain." When he reaches that city of rest, beholds the indescribable Majesty, stands face to face with his Lord, whom he has loved and served, he will know all that is meant by the exceeding glory of the ministration of righteousness.

4. In so vast a multitude as I now address, there may be those who are endeavouring to reach heaven through obedience to the law. Are you wiser than God? Is the atonement a mistake? "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" Can the law "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"? Go to the law, as given to Moses, examine yourselves by it word by word, and say whether every requirement has been fulfilled; and if the letter has been fulfilled, go deeper, and see how far the spirit has been apprehended and realized. Have you loved the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? and enclosed your neighbour in the folds of an all-loving philanthropy? What is the answer which conscience forces upon you? The blush of guilt is

on your cheek; the fire of self-condemnation is kindled within you. Don't attempt to scale the sides of Sinai; there is nothing there for guilty man but "condemnation" and "death." Climb the hill on which the Saviour bleeds. Repair to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Tell Jesus that you have broken the law; tell Him how guilty and weak you are; ask Him to pity and save your soul; and He will surely take you up into His infinite heart!

As man passes from one "ministration" to another, and so is brought nearer and nearer to God, we should remind ourselves that the advancing ages multiply our responsibilities. We cannot live under the "exceeding glory" without incurring proportionate obligations. It is more awful to live now than to have lived in the opening youth of the world. To-day is the mighty sum of all yesterdays! He who lives in the nineteenth century has nineteen centuries' experience and history as his dowry. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Mark that terrible word, "sorer." The developments of divine purpose have a practical

bearing on every man's destiny. We are not permitted to trifle with the dignity of the epoch under which we live. Man's privileges affect man's judgment. A *birthday* is taken into account in the judicial examination of human history. According to the breadth of light which shone upon our span of life, shall be the rigour of the judgment by which we shall be judged: "for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." These words make me tremble. So many of us have lived as though we were in the mere twilight of history, forgetting that the moral sun is at high noon! Our life has been a life of frailest infancy, not of vigorous manhood. We have lived as though God had done next to nothing for us, forgetting that He hath come in our likeness, and suffered in our stead! Need more be said to penetrate us with horror, and awaken us to duty?

LETTER TO SMYRNA.

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“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—REV. ii. 8—10.

I. CHRIST reveals Himself to His people according to their moral condition. In support of this assertion it is only necessary to refer to the superscriptions of the letters “unto the seven churches which are in Asia.” By the title or representation which the Son of man assumes, we may anticipate the revelation in which He is about to appear. His very *names* are vital with moral-significance, as the very hem of His garment is impregnated with remedial power.

A casual examination of the superscriptions will illustrate the point. Take four examples:—

1. To the angel of the church in Pergamos write;

“These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Given such a superscription to find the moral purpose of the epistle which it introduces, what may we expect from a divine speaker who bears “the sharp sword with two edges”? Can you expect Him to utter words of gentle sympathy and consolation? Would such words be in congruity with the attitude and weapon of battle? From such a superscription may we not naturally infer a purpose to smite, to avenge, to “break in pieces the oppressor”? You find that such an inference is justified by the exclamation of the offended Judge,—“Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will *fight* against thee with the sword of My mouth.”

2. “Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire; His feet are like fine brass.” Can there be any hesitation in foretelling the moral intent of such a superscription? When the Son of God enters a church with “eyes like unto a flame of fire,” that church may expect examination, scrutiny, trial, penetration that cannot be resisted. A glance at the epistle will show that the aspect and the purpose are in perfect harmony:—“I am He which *searcheth* the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

3. “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia

write ; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." Is such a superscription at all enigmatical? He who lays His hand upon the doors of the universe, and bears upon His shoulder the key of David, is surely about to commission His saints to arise and grasp some opportunity that is fraught with eternal blessing, to enter upon a course of service which will involve and sanctify the highest interests of humanity. Is such an anticipation warranted by the genius of the letter? Let the letter answer :—"Behold, I have set before thee *an open door*, and no man can shut it."

4. "Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write ; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." The introduction prepares the way for a gush of tenderness ; such a reference to the most pathetic facts of His earthly history must anticipate a stream of infinite pity and tenderness, and that such anticipation is realized will be seen as we proceed. The church in Smyrna was a suffering church. It sat in the dust, and its lamentations were turned into mockery by a malicious and triumphant foe. Its history was one of toil and tribulation, and the prophetic throbs of the coming time foretold suffering, imprisonment, and death. The church assumed a mourner's attitude, and gathered sackcloth round its trembling

frame ; and to such a church how could the Saviour come but in the tenderest aspect of His holy and blessed nature ?

Enough, then, may be seen from these four examples to, support the assertion that Christ reveals Himself to His people according to their moral condition ; and when I say to His people, I mean to the saint alike in his individuality and in his fraternal relationship. In this, I am persuaded, we have an explanation of the varying experience of the Christian, and of the diversified and changeful mission of the church. To one man, or to one church, Christ presents Himself bearing "the sharp sword with two edges;" to another, with eyes blazing with penetrating light ; to another, as holding the key of opportunity ; and to another, as grasping infinitude, and girt with the memorials of death and the pledges of ascension. It is possible to have all these, and many more, visions of the selfsame Saviour. Our apprehensions of His identity are regulated by our moral conditions, so that every man has only to declare what aspect of Christ he beholds, in order to declare the attitude and tone of his own soul. With this before us as a general principle, it will not be difficult to show how such a superscription would animate and sustain the church in Smyrna. The reasonings of that church might easily fall into some such form as this :—



1st. As our Saviour is the first and the last, all things must be under His dominion.

"The First."—Who can reveal the mystery of these words, or number the ages we must re-traverse, ere we can behold the first gleam on that horizon which encircles God as an aureole of unwaning light! The expression takes us back over immeasurable gulfs in which the centuries have sunk; we wing our way beyond the dust of every empire; pass every orb which burns in mysterious silence in the domes of creation; penetrate far beyond the sound of the song of the eldest seraphim; we enter the solemn pavilion of the unpeopled infinitude; no voices sing, no footfall resounds, no heart throbs; we stand trembling at our own temerity in the palace of the solitary God,—in a silence so terrible that it speaks; we are there, before the "Be" of infinite power has hurled the orbs through the silent voids; all this, and infinitely more, we must realize in order to attain the dimmest apprehension of the mystery of being the First.

"The Last."—Another mystery! This expression bears us onward until the surging sea of life is for ever hushed, until the divine government has answered all the purposes of Infinite Wisdom. Over what cemeteries we must pass, I know not; we must advance until the Creator exclaim from His throne, as the Redeemer cried from the cross, "It is finished!" Thus far must we go, or remain for

ever in ignorance of the secret which vitalizes the declaration, "I am the Last." Now see how the eyes of the suffering ones brighten! Their reasonings are set to music. "As our Saviour," say they, "is the first and the last, all things must be comprehended in His dominion." If we look back, beyond the birth of time, or the worship of angels, or the fabrication of worlds, behold, He stands in solitary sovereignty—divine, yet human—a God in the silence of His own unity, yet a slain lamb receiving in anticipation the adoration of a grateful universe: and if we look forward, we behold Him in the far-off horizon, King of kings, and Lord of lords, crowned with unnumbered crowns, human as when on earth, yet divine as in the unbeginning eternity.

2nd. As our Saviour was dead and is alive again, so we, who are now enduring the fellowship of His sufferings, shall know the power of His resurrection.

The process is—suffering, death, resurrection: all who follow Christ pass this discipline. The story of the resurrection is far from having been fully told. The angel sitting at the head of the grave could tell us much more, could we but command the courage to listen to the radiant messenger.

"I was dead." The counsels of eternity are epitomized in this declaration. The problem over which the ages bent in perplexity—at which they looked

again and again in the wonder of a great agony, and which they bequeathed to posterity with a hope that was broadly streaked with the blackness of despair—is, in reality, solved by this fact. All the love which glows in the infinite heart is expressed in words so simple,—“I was dead”—“Alive again.” Let me inquire around what centre the church assembles. Do you hasten to reply, The cross? I answer, Not there only. The cross first, but afterwards the grave! “If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” In the centre of the church is an empty tomb, and to a doubting world the church can ever answer, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” And, “seeing” it, what then? Why, from the sacred rock a living stream breaks, and as the countless multitudes drink they exclaim, “These are the waters of immortality.”

Need more be said to establish the congruity between the method of revelation and the moral condition of the church in Smyrna? Could suffering have been approached with greater tenderness? Never was Grief asked to look through her weary and swollen eyes at an image so beautiful and inspiring as this; and all the saints of God who are called to the discipline of pain may gaze on the same aspect. When thou art in sadness, O child of God, go, see the place where the Lord lay; when all thy aspirations darken into clouds, and hang heavily

around thee, go, see the place where the Lord lay ; when thy questionings, and wonderings, and yearnings beat back upon the soul whence they issued, finding no rest on earth, no entrance into heaven, go, see the place where the Lord lay ; and as thou art gazing in thickening perplexity on the forsaken rock, a voice, tremulous with music which cannot be described, shall, by the sympathetic pronunciation of thy name, recall thy fondest memories, and unseal the fountains of unutterable love.

II. Christ assures His people that He is intimately acquainted with every feature of their history. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty." You can conceive the thrilling joy with which these words would be heard by the suffering saints of Smyrna. It is something to know that every wound, every pang, every sorrow we endure for Christ is perfectly known to Him, who carried our sorrows and bare our sicknesses. How deep soever the secrecy in which your tears are showered, the eye of Jesus is full upon you in every crisis of woe ; and when, in the bitterness of imagined solitude, you exclaim, "O that I knew where I might find Him !" He reveals Himself through the darkness of your grief, and says, with His own infinite gentleness, "I know, I know." Is not that enough ? The "I know" of love is the smile of God. There is a child, let me suppose, who is called to suffer much on behalf of his father ; that father is in a position

which enables him to observe every action of the sufferer, without the sufferer himself being immediately aware of the paternal supervision. The watcher marks how bravely his boy conducts the defence ; how he resists every blow, and hurls back every bolt, having first made it hot by his eager grasp, on the head of his enemy ; sees the quiver of his lip, and the gleam of his eye, and all the passion of his insulted love ; and as the suffering child looks around in his weakness, and pants for greater power, the strong and all but adoring father clasps him to a grateful breast, and interrupts the hurried utterance of the weary one by saying, "I know, I know." And it was well he did know, for among the many things which must be seen to be appreciated, filial heroism occupies no obscure place. You may tell that the lip quivered,—but to have seen it ! You cannot describe the flush of passion in words worthy of its warmth : your own eye must be upon it, and you must immediately receive the mystery into your own wondering and thankful heart. Men make but poor work of painting a sunset ; and a thunderstorm is never so degraded as when it is talked about. Thank God ! Jesus sees our sufferings, is present in the cloud of our sorrow, needs not to be told what the soul has undergone, but breaks in upon the gathering darkness with words which bring with them the brightness and hope of morning, "I know, I know."

The fact that Jesus knows all that we suffer for Him should serve three purposes :—

1st. It should embolden us to seek His help. He is within whisper-reach of all His saints. All the desires of the heart may be expressed in one entreating sigh—one appealing glance. The soul's necessities may be too urgent to set forth in words. I have seen a little child lift its tiny finger and point to an object which it desired to possess, and that outstretched finger has been prayer enough to avail with the loving mother. Ay, and there have been hours in the experience of all saints in which they could but point, or yearn, or glance, or groan, without uttering a word ; and in such hours the heavens have often dropped upon them the most golden blessings. Seek the help of the all-knowing Saviour ; He stands by thy side, only shrouded lest His glory might quench the flickering of thy frail life.

2nd. It should inspire us with invincible courage. As the presence of a valorous leader stimulates an army, so should the assured guardianship of the Son of God inspire every soldier of the cross. The shadow of Christ falls over us, and that shadow is stronger than a thousand shields. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is an assurance which strengthens our faith that "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." Does your courage fail ? I point you to the Son of God, whose eye is evermore gleaming upon you. He knows your

frame ; He remembereth that you are dust ; He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. You fail, but He never ! “He fainteth not, neither is weary.” I say, then, that His presence amongst us, and His consequent knowledge of all the circumstances which constitute our history, associated as that presence is with “exceeding great and precious promises,” should inspire the saint and the church with invincible and immortal courage.

3rd. It should clothe us with profoundest humility. That we can do anything for Jesus is a fact which should extinguish all fleshly pride. The true honour is that which most abases the carnal man. That Jesus should permit His church to receive a single blow which was intended for His own heart, is a circumstance which should not only awaken the most rapturous joy, but overwhelm us with the profoundest sense of our unworthiness to sustain so transcendent a dignity. He might have deprived the church of this luxury of suffering in His stead ; but it hath pleased Him, in the infinite fulness of His love, to permit us to be wounded for the sake of His name. The apostles appreciated their high calling in this matter of doing and suffering : when their cheek was smitten, and their honour insulted, and their name cast out as an abomination, their hearts were filled with ecstatic joy—“they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they

were counted worthy to suffer for His name." Humility and joy there held sweet fellowship. The voice of God and the history of believers upon this question concur in a loud and penetrating call upon all ages of the church: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "We glory in tribulation, . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Such is the sweet assurance of Christ, and such the resulting experience of suffering saints. Do I address a sufferer? To thee Jesus says, "I know." Is not that enough? The tear, indeed, falls downward, but the sound of its falling flieth upward to the ear of God.

III. Christ reveals to His suffering saints the fact of their imperishable wealth. Turn your attention to the ninth verse, and determine which is its brightest gem. The verse is this:—"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, but are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Can there be any doubt as to the most golden expression in such a verse? Look at



the parenthesis, and you have it! Such a parenthesis could have been dictated only by the Son of God. How like the effusion of the Infinite mind! A volume in a sentence—noontide in a glance—eternal harmonies in a breath—heaven in a parenthesis! Often, in my hours of trouble, I have looked at this sentence and its surroundings. It flashes upon one so unexpectedly. It is a garden in a wilderness, a song of hope mingling with the night-winds of despair. Slowly we pass over the dismal words, “Thy works, and tribulation, and poverty,” and with startling suddenness we overpass the separating bracket, and then—then! Outside of the bracket we have cold, shivering, desolate “poverty,” and inside “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away”! Think of it! The very typography is suggestive; only a bracket between “poverty” and “rich”! And is it not so even in reality? What is there between thee, O suffering saint, and joys immortal? What between thee and heaven? What between thee and thy soul’s Saviour? Only a bracket—the poor, frail, perishing bracket of thy dying body. No more. There is but a step between poverty and wealth. The history of transition is condensed into one sentence, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Let the bracket fall, and you will see Him as He is. Sometimes, indeed, the bracket becomes, as it were, transparent, and the saint has

seen the coming wonders, while as yet they were unrealized. Hear the words of a dying martyr,—“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Hear the words of another, who was bound to the altar,—“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

When, therefore, we estimate the wealth of a good man, we must remember that there is a moral as well as a material, an invisible as well as a visible, property. The good man is an heir, and his heirship relates to possessions which no human power of calculation can compute. In the days of our inexperience, we imagined that one word could be amply explained by another; we deemed that all interpretations of language could be discovered through the aid of the lexicographer. We have lived to see the vanity of such imagining. Some words alter their meaning according to the character of the speaker who employs them. *Character* is the lexicon which gives the true meaning of moral terms. A word often alters its meaning according to the position of the circle in which it is employed. Take, for example, this word in the parenthesis,—

the word "rich." Of this word almost every man has a definition of his own. You may have had occasion to visit a poor man, and, as you have encouraged him to talk, he has told you that if he had from twenty to thirty shillings per week he would account himself "rich." But go to the lord whose land the poor man cultivates, and see whether the poor man's definition of "rich" will be accepted by the baron. And so, the higher the circle into which you penetrate, the more will significations vary. Pass, then, into the highest circles of all, where the Lord Jesus sits enthroned amid His own unsearchable riches, and ask Him what is the meaning of the word "rich." O Son of God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, by whom were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, reveal to us the meaning of Thine own language; make this word, as it were, a rent through which we may catch a glimpse of our bright reversion in the skies, and give to us the exceeding comfort of an imperishable hope!

Happy the church into whose history this parenthesis is interjected by the Son of God. If you as a church ask me how you may ascertain whether you are "rich," I should answer, (1) Is your faith strong? (2) Are your labours abundant? (3) Are your spiritual children numerous? Every holy,

faithful, laborious, humble, trustful church may claim this divine parenthesis; and how much soever the tempests may howl around it—there may be poverty on the one side and persecution on the other—the time shall come when this parenthesis alone will express your glorious and blissful destiny. But mark, you cannot enter, so to speak, the parenthesis without going through the exterior discipline. This parenthesis sums up the results of many a battle, intermingles the grace of God, and the work of Jesus, and the response of man; it marks the ultimate evolution of a history in which the light of heaven and the darkness of earth have played mysterious parts; it is the dawning of eternal day upon those who have served the Saviour through the weary watches of the tempestuous night.

IV. Christ comforts His suffering ones by disarming their fears. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days." I cannot arbitrate between contending critics as to the precise signification of the expression "ten days." It may, indeed, be that the word "day" is to be regarded as equivalent to the word year, and that the "ten days" refer to the ten years of sore persecution which befel the Asiatic churches during the reign of the tiger-hearted Diocletian. I say this *may* be the case, but I care not to fabricate a

strong plea in its favour. It is enough for me to secure a firm footing on the general principle which underlies the prediction. That general principle is, that there is a limit to the suffering of the church. Persecution is an affair of "ten days." Diocletian is the tyrant of a vanishing hour. To-day he raves in madness, to-morrow his last yell has for ever expired. "Our light afflictions are but for a moment." The Apostle triumphantly contrasts the brevity of suffering with the duration of glory. Hear him! the words seem to quail under the weight of thought with which they are charged; brighter and brighter flames the vision as the Apostle towers to the summit of his climax. "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The "ten days" of oppression vanish in the infinite perspective; the fires of martyrdom pale before the effulgence of a sun which burns with eternal lustre; the sigh of suffering is lost in the pealing harmonies of unceasing song. In prospect of suffering, Christ says to His people, "Fear not." But why this counsel? Does it not stiffen the heart as a word of chilling mockery? O Son of God, why tell the people not "to fear"? It is because He knows the full interpretation of suffering. Suffering is education. Grief is discipline. Let me remind you that the suffering referred to is *external*. The house is smitten, but the tenant

is infinitely beyond the sphere of flood, or flame, or steel. Let me further remind you that those sufferings have been overcome. Suffering is a vanquished power. "I have overcome the world." We have fellowship in our suffering, a fellowship that is mastery. Are you in Gethsemane? Do the winds howl drearily around you? Is it a seven-fold darkness that shuts out the light of the stars? Ah me! I know full well the meaning of your great suffering; the iron hath been crushed through my own swelling heart, and I can therefore sympathize with the children of grief. You say you hear the approach of the ruffian band, and that the flare of the traitor's torch falls upon your drenched cheek. True. Yet, courage. Snatch that torch from his grasp, hold it to the ground—close! What see ye? A footprint? Ay! Any inscription? Ay! Read it—dash off the new-starting tear, and read! Speak aloud! Refrain not! "Be of good cheer, I have overcome." Why, it is the footprint of Christ! He has been standing just where you are! You have not gone further down the troubled valley than your Master; you cannot get beyond the sphere of Christ; your suffering cannot lay claim to originality; every pang has been anticipated; your streams of grief mingle with His rivers of sorrow. We "know the fellowship of His sufferings." Every woe bears the inscription, "Overcome."

We can identify this "Fear not" as the solemn word of Christ. It is a form of expression peculiarly His own. It bears His image and superscription. We often heard Him employ it when He walked amongst us in the form of a man. When we were tossed on the troubled sea, He came near to us and said, "Fear not, it is I." When we were few in number, and the objects of a haughty scorn, He gently said to us, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." When He told us that bonds and imprisonments awaited us in every city, He added, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." We were well accustomed to His "Fear not;" and now that He has ascended to the throne, and once more addressed us in this familiar tone, we exclaim with reviving courage, It is the voice of the Conqueror—the cry of the King!

V. Christ soothes and nerves His suffering saints by the promise of infinite compensation. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The word compensation is to be accepted in this connection with the fullest recognition of those limitations which the regenerate mind will instantly suggest. The help which analogy can afford in the understanding of Christ's promise is but partial—necessarily and most happily partial,—yet it may shed a trembling ray on the central question before

us. The saints are not for ever to lie under the cruel imputation of unworthiness. As in the case of a man who has been wantonly defamed and injured, is it enough that his peers pronounce him merely "Not guilty"? Is no account to be taken of the wrongs he has endured? Are his wounds to be unmollified, except by the healing power of tardy time? In the name of humanity, No! "Not guilty" is to be translated into "innocent;" justification is to be succeeded by compensation; well-attested faithfulness is to be adorned with a crown. It is so, only in an infinitely higher degree, in the spiritual life. Jesus Christ will not only deliver His saints from the sphere of suffering; He will introduce them into the sphere of eternal rest and joy. There is "a recompence of reward." The languid eye of the suffering saint is turned to no merely negative heaven; it kindles into eloquent brightness as it gazes on the "inheritance incorruptible," and the crown radiant with immortal glory. Every pang is to become a pleasure, every scar an abiding memorial of honour. *We* have to do with the *faithfulness*; Christ with the *crowning*. Long endurance on our part will not tarnish the promised diadem. It is *there*, look ye!—*there*, just on the other side of the golden clouds; and when life's last gasp shall expire, ye shall stand as crowned kings in the Infinite presence.

Blessed conjunction—"Thou" and "I," the suffer-



ing saint and the promising Saviour! "Be thou faithful, and I will give." As it is personal suffering, so also shall it be personal reward. And what will the glorified saint do with that crown of life? Wear it? Methinks not. It will suffice him to feel its first pressure—that will be heaven enough!—and, having felt *that*, surely he will cast the crown at the feet of the Lamb, saying, "Thou only art worthy to be crowned."

## THE CONVICTED WOMAN.

“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery ; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest Thou ? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, *as though He heard them not*. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last : and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more.”—JOHN viii. 3—11.

IN such an act did the power, the love, or the wisdom predominate ? As well ask which colour predominates in the rainbow : they are all blent into one arch of beauty.

Would we see Jesus in His most fascinating

charms? Then we must look at Him as He stands face to face with a notorious sinner. That face of His never lightens into such a glory as when it looks upon the darkness of penitent guilt.

This incident suggests four lessons:—

I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN SOCIAL CRIME MERELY FOR THE PURPOSES OF RELIGIOUS PARTISANSHIP.

Did these scribes and Pharisees care one tittle for the spirituality and sanctity of the law? When they found this poor unhappy creature, did their hearts bleed with pity, or their eyes dissolve in tenderness, or did they say with the sorrow of a great disappointment, Alas! our poor sister has been overmatched by the enemy of man, and we must save her from the pit on whose brink she lies! Not a word of it! Not a tear stained their eyes—not a pang of pity quivered in their steel breasts—their humanity was eaten up by their pompous and zealous bigotry. They looked at her through the medium of the stern law, on the one hand, and on the other regarded her as a practical puzzle for the revolutionary Teacher. They took an interest in criminals, indeed, but their interest was a stroke in business, a defence of policy, a blow at progress. I allude to this department of the story with special emphasis, in order to denounce a most pretentious and rotten philanthropy. There are men who find their meat and their drink in criminal statistics.

They are most industrious in collecting facts—in visiting gaols, hospitals, workhouses, and penitentiaries—in cross-examining prisoners, paupers, and refugees—with what intent? What is the meaning of all this industry? I judge no man; but I do urge that it is perfectly possible to do all this, to earn the reputation of a great philanthropist, and yet all the while to be using all the facts merely for the purpose of entangling and frustrating the representatives of a wider and diviner creed. These scribes and Pharisees acted as though they were glad of having found a rare example of crime, which they could use as a test of Messiah's morality. It was an opportunity not to be lost. It was a trap which must be skilfully set. It was an occasion which might lead on to victory. Now, it is worth while inquiring whether our interest in criminals and crime is really the expression of a piteous and yearning philanthropy, or whether we encourage it merely for the purpose of maintaining and illustrating some favourite theory? Are we naturalists, going forth to the mountains and dales for the purpose of collecting a museum of curiosities? Are we a kind of geologic moralists, digging into deep strata that we may find unusual specimens? Are we sportsmen who delight in capturing game, that we may nail to the hall door the memorials of our triumphs? Or do we, like the Blessed Philanthropist, our Lord and Saviour, go

forth "to seek and to save the lost," to lift up the downcast, and turn the wanderer into the right way? Let us guard against a lifeless and tearless philanthropy; let us dread the day when we can look on crime with eyes which glisten only because our favourite hypothesis is maintained; let us remember that it is one thing to be the policemen of the church, bringing in poor prisoners for judgment, and another to be like Him who wept and bled that prisoners might be free. Philanthropy may degenerate into mere formality. Men may be driven to any lengths in defending a sectarian idea. An anatomist may slash the dissecting knife through the heart of his own father for the purpose of establishing some favourite physiological dogma.

## II. THE HIGHEST QUALIFICATION FOR SOCIAL JUDGMENT IS PERSONAL INNOCENCE.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Jesus does not abrogate the law,—He does not set himself in opposition to Moses: the scribes and Pharisees desired to antagonize Moses and Jesus, but the answer which they received withered up their purposes, and gave their thoughts a turn which they regarded with supreme aversion. He shows, however, that the law is to be administered by clean hands; that the thunders of the law are to be articulated by pure lips; that the stone of

judgment is to be flung with the pity of holiness, and not with the wantonness of revenge.

I value this counsel for two reasons :—

First. *It gives full scope to the faculty of conscience.* Jesus did not accuse these men ; they accused themselves. He might have arraigned them one by one, and passed judgment on each, but He abbreviates the process by making each man judge himself. He did not say, "There is *not* a sinless man among you," but He asked the sinless man to step forward and cast the first stone at his erring sister. Conscience takes the candle into the inmost recesses of our being. Conscience holds up a mirror to the leprous soul. Conscience shows us the cracks in our porcelain respectability, and the specks upon our boasted morality. This dread agent of God in the human soul showed that the main difference between the accused and the accusers was that her sin was found out, and theirs was not ; the sun had got hold of her iniquity, while theirs lay rotting in the darkness. They wished to pass for respectable men—decent members of society—pillars in the temple of rectitude ; but when conscience, commissioned by divine authority, began to rifle their history, they fled from the sanctuary without daring to fling the stone of retribution.

Second. *It reveals God's view of human society.* "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." Man saw these scribes and Pharisees in eager haste to

honour the law, to brand crime, to maintain righteousness; but God saw the under-lurking villany, and marked every spring of poison which bubbled in the depraved heart, and bade them look at *themselves* before looking at and despising others. God sees the hidden chamber of imagery. His eye alights on the interior view, and it is by that view that all His judgments are regulated. Stripping society of its pompous garniture—laying off its gilded trinketry—He pours the sunlight into the caverns of the heart, and shows how the reptiles of iniquity are fattening there. God does not see us as we see each other in the church, in this holy hour; His eye is looking at the very core and spring of being.

Personal innocence, then, is the highest qualification for social judgment. He is a daring or a wanton man who lightly assumes the functions of social magistracy. Where there is most holiness there is most pity. It was God's own holiness that wept itself into mercy,—such mercy!—mercy that died and rose again that sinners might “sin no more.” When we are under the full dominion of that mercy we shall need but the faintest breeze of appeal to shake the tears of pity from our melting eyes.

III. READINESS TO ACCUSE ANOTHER • IS NO GUARANTEE OF PERSONAL RECTITUDE.

To have seen these men haling the poor woman and stating her crime so fully and emphatically, one

might have concluded that they were themselves just men, who lived daily in the fear and love of the Most High ; and yet such conclusion would have been in utter antagonism to the melancholy reality of the case. We have all seen men who have gnashed their teeth with diabolic savageness through the quivering frame of a poor offender, and hung on to the swelling flesh with a pertinacity that would have done credit to the fiercest beast in the jungle, and these men all the while imagining that by dooming others to the hottest hell they were proving their own meetness for the highest heaven. Alas ! though such men may turn their red eyes to heaven as if in prayer, they have not the spirit of Jesus, who forgiveth and receiveth the world's worst sinners. The scribes and Pharisees were more ready to condemn than was Jesus Christ. The Saviour was not so intent upon helling men as they were. Eagerness to hurry men off to perdition is but a poor pledge of piety. Many men would avoid this poor unhappy woman, who are themselves no paragons of excellence. I know not of a more distressing sight than to see one poor sinner dealing harshly and furiously with another. Each sinner seems to think his own sin less heinous than that of his neighbour. There, is a man who brandies himself into stupidity every night, over his own fireside, and who renders himself disgusting to every member of his household, yet that man turns scornfully



away from this poor woman! There, is another, who is "such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him;" from whom his own children flee in terror; who cultivates the lowest and meanest of all tyrannies, tyranny in his own family,—yet that man turns scornfully away from this poor woman! There, is a stingy, shrivelled, rotten soul, that can hardly afford himself bread, who begrudges his family every article of apparel, who accounts himself clever if he can cheat his tradesmen out of a shilling, who would grind and crush the bones of his workmen, and could see every one of them buried in a pauper's grave,—yet that man turns scornfully away from this poor woman! There, is a proud, haughty, glass-eyed, cork-hearted man, who expects the poor to clear themselves off before his imperial march, who never wept over weakness, never shed a smile on the orphan's lonely way, who talks to the poor of the parish laws, and points the breadless and homeless to the workhouse,—yet that man turns scornfully away from this poor woman! There, is a man who can spend hours in slander, who smacks his empoisoned lips like a debauchee, when he has words of dishonour to say about another, who can whisper defamation, who can hiss syllables of cruelty,—yet that man can present himself among the sons of God, and turn scornfully away from this poor woman! O sirs, it makes one's heart sore and sad to mark how one child of

guilt can eagerly brand another, and send him, amid frantic clapping of unclean hands, to the fellowship of devils.

IV. TRUE INTEREST IN SOCIAL CRIME IS BEST SHOWN BY SAVING THE CRIMINAL FROM DESPAIR.

"Go, and sin no more." The good man never ignores the presence of sin. Jesus Christ, with all His gentleness and mercy, did not tell the woman that she was innocent, nor did He treat her as an innocent woman. Christ was ever forward to maintain the broad distinction between right and wrong. I believe that if we follow His example we shall frown upon sin in all its aspects and tendencies, and never cast the faintest smile upon its downward course. We must never treat the thief as though he were honest, or the liar as though he were truthful, or the proud as though he were humble, or the miser as though he were generous. We owe such distinctions to the dignity of virtue, and they must be maintained for ever. At the same time our lesson is this: *Never cast the penitent sinner into despair.* Jesus said, "Go, and sin no more;" take one more chance in life; turn over a page; begin again; treat this as a second birthday; go, and make the future better than the past. Thank God for such words of hope! The beams of mercy shoot far across the gloom of guilt; the voice of hope falls on the ear of the remotest wanderer! Christ here teaches us the true method of rescuing

and restoring the criminal,—*never cast him into despair.*

“Men might be better if we better deemed  
Of them. The worst way to improve the world  
Is to condemn it. Men may overget  
Delusion—not despair.”

If you *can* say one gentle word, or give one hopeful glance, to the prisoner who is brought before you, I call upon you in the name of God to do it. The blessing of him who is ready to perish will come upon you, and in a recovered life you may find your ultimate reward. Would not this poor woman for ever feel a kindling love to Him who spake this word of hope to her? Would she hesitate for a moment on whom to pour the benedictions of her glowing and expanding heart? The righteous Pharisees, the holy scribes, would have smitten her with death; but the divine Saviour spread a new page of life before her, and told her to begin again. A word of hope may strike a happy influence through an entire lifetime. Those of us who imagine that we have never sinned do not know the value of such a word; but those of us who have taken our sins into dark places, and wept over them, and then taken them to the Saviour's cross, and heard His voice of mercy, know how the soul warms, and gladdens, and sings in reply to the word of liberty and love. “Deal gently with the erring one.” To-morrow thou mayest thyself eat of

the forbidden tree, and pine for some look of hope. The enemy may get a sudden advantage over thee, and if thou hast only scribes and Pharisees for friends, thine will be an unhappy lot. O pause, ere consigning a fellow-creature to the hell of despair ! Arrest the harsh word which burns on thy tongue ; consider thyself lest thou also be tempted. " With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." The voice of Jesus to every man is, " Go, and sin no more." Christ came into the world that He might make an everlasting end of sin. He is the sinner's only Saviour. " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He not only *bids* us " sin no more," but He *helps* us to conquer every temptation. Not only does He urge us to rise to heaven, but He puts forth His hand, and gives us the very power which He bids us employ.

## THE THEOLOGY OF MONEY.

(NOTES OF A SERMON PREACHED IN CONNECTION WITH THE  
SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE SOCIETY.)

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"Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."—DEUT. viii. 18.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."—1 COR. xvi. 2.

AFORETIME I have addressed those who are advanced in life upon the dedication of property: some believed, "some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." I propose at this time to turn away from the old, the prejudiced, and the unimpressible, and to address those who are just beginning to understand their relations to money,—the young, whose hand is about to be laid on the property of the world, and who are open to conviction as to the uses and responsibilities of their stewardship. They, I presume, are willing to be instructed as to the theology of money.

The word "stewardship" involves the vital principle of the whole question. It brings us at once to the first text,—“Thou shalt remember the Lord

thy God: for *it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.*" Remember *that*, and industry is turned into a sacrament. Remember *that*, and you will feel yourself working side by side with God, in the field, the warehouse, the bank, the shop, the office, the pulpit. What a blow this text strikes at one of the most popular and mischievous fallacies in secular life. That fallacy is, that *man is the maker of his own money.* Men who can see God moulding worlds, and circling through the heavens with a comet in His right hand, cannot see Him suggesting an idea in business, smiling on the plough, guiding the merchant's pen, and bringing summer into a brain long winter-bound and barren. We have dethroned the Most High in the realm of commerce; and in place of the heavenly Majesty have erected unclean and pestiferous idols: we have put into the holy place the foul little gods named Trick and Cunning; and over our completed fortunes have prepared incense for our own nostril. We have locked God up in the *church*; we have crushed Him into the *Bible* like a faded rose-leaf; we have shut upon Him the iron gate of the market-place; we have forced commerce into widowhood, and compelled trade to babble the idiotic creed of atheism.

There is always a danger of becoming entangled in the intricacies of second causes. The element of mediation enters so largely into God's government:

one world lighting another ; one man depending on another ; and one influence diffusing itself in a thousand directions, and entering into the most subtle and complicated combinations ; all this, I say, intercepts our vision of the absolute and divine. We have a difficulty in understanding anything but straight lines. If money fell from the firmament like rain, or snow, or sunshine, we could, perhaps, more readily concede that it came from God ; but because it comes through circuitous, and sometimes obscure channels, we feel not upon it the warmth of the divine touch, and see on it no nobler image than Cæsar's. We are guilty as the ancient harlot, on whose giddy head God poured out His wrath. "She said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." But God hedged up her way with thorns, He caused her to lose her paths, and said, in a tone which combined complaint and anger,—“For she did not know that *I* gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.” He who pours down the light of the sun, pours out the oil. He who arrays Lebanon and Bashan in all the pomp of summer foliage, gives wool and flax to cover the nakedness of man. The great world is one sky-domed church, and there is nothing common or unclean.

God wishes this fact to be treasured in the

memory of His saints. "Thou shalt *remember*." It is to be ever present in our recollections ; it is to be a star, beaming on the troubled waters, by which we are to strike our course ; it is to be a cloud, a fire, for the day and night of our long pilgrimage. Mark the happy consequences of this grateful recollection. First of all, God and wealth are ever to be associated. "The silver and the gold are *mine*." There is but one absolute proprietor. We hold our treasures on loan ; we occupy a stewardship. Consequent upon this is a natural and most beautiful *humility*. "What hast thou that thou hast not received ?" When the merchant sits down in the evening light to count his day's gains, he is to remember that the Lord his God gave him power to get wealth. When the workman throws down the instrument of his labour, that he may receive the reward of his toil, he is to remember that the Lord his God gave him power to get wealth. When the young man receives the first recognition of his remunerative industry, he is to remember that the Lord his God gave him power to get wealth. Thus the getting of money becomes a sacred thing. Money is a mighty power ; wealth occupies a proud position in the parliament of action. Trade thus becomes a means of grace, and commerce an ally of religion. In one word, every act of life is restored to its direct and vital relation to the centre of the universe. There are men who assert that the voice



of the pulpit should never be heard in the emporium of commerce. Fools, and blind: They forget that they could not move a muscle but for the grace of God. They could not originate or apply an idea but for the mercy of heaven. They have no objection to hear a short sermon once a week, and with that they rock their conscience into a six days' repose. I hold, in opposition to this atheistic commerce, that every ledger should be a Bible, true as if written by the finger of God; that every place of business should be made sacred by the presence of righteousness, verity, honour, and justice. The man who can be atheistic in business could be atheistic in heaven itself. The man who never turns his warehouse into a church will never fail to turn the church into a warehouse. Even christian men are anxious that too much of what they call religion should not be introduced into places of trade. They speak about God with a quivering whisper, as if they were speaking about a ghost, whose hollow eye was fixed upon them. When they refer to Him it is with a backward motion of a trembling finger, or a jerk of the voice, which indicates anything but moral repose. There is no filial jubilation of spirit; no leaping of the heart, as if it would go straight up to God. They will come once on a Sunday to the sanctuary; they will snarl because there are so many collections; they will sing a hymn, but must sit down before finishing the last line of the last

verse. Men who make money with both hands, who run greedily after gain, and serve Mammon with uncooling zeal, are not likely to remember that the Lord their God gave them power to get wealth. Memory is occupied with other subjects. The heart is foreclosed. The whole nature has signed, sealed, and delivered a bond to entertain no such recollections. In enumerating the happy consequences arising from a grateful recognition of God's relation to wealth, the check upon all wastefulness and extravagance might be mentioned. Christianity enjoins frugality upon its disciples; its command is, "Gather up the fragments." The man who *wastes* money would also waste his moral dowry. An extravagant Christian—that is, a man who outruns his resources—is dishonest, and his life is a continual felony. Money is one of the limitations of power, and to overstep *that* is a practical blasphemy, an unpronounced but most terrible reproach upon divine arrangements.

This, then, is our basis principle,—viz., that God giveth man power to get wealth, and, consequently, that God sustains an immediate relation to the property of the world. Take the case of a young man just entering business. If his heart is uneducated and unwatched, he will regard business as a species of gambling; if his heart be pivoted on right principles, he will esteem business a moral service, as the practical side of his prayers, a public

embodiment of many aspirations and convictions. In course of time, the young man realizes money on his own account. Looking at his gold and silver, he says, "*I made that.*" There is a glow of honest pride on his cheek. He looks upon the reward of his industry, and the light of joy kindles in his eye. While he looks upon his first-earned gold, I wish to speak to him, gently and persuasively, these words,—"*Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.*" Instantly his view of the property is elevated, enlarged, sanctified. He was just about to say that his own arm had gotten him the victory, and to forget that though the image is Cæsar's, yet the gold is God's. What is the natural line of thought through which the young man would run under such circumstances? It would lie in some such direction as this, I venture to suggest:—"What can be the meaning of this word 'remember'? Does it not call me to *gratitude*? Is it not intended to turn my heart and my eye *heavenward*? As God has given me 'power to get wealth,' am I not bound to return some recognition of His goodness and mercy?" While these questions are agitating his mind, the apostle Paul says to him, "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him.*" Thus the principle is turned to practical account. A time is named, a measure is fixed.

The time, *God's elect day*; the measure, *God's gift of power*. Can anything be more beautiful? anything, presumptively, more like God? The sabbath is emphatically a day of *remembrance*; memory is called to the awakening of the most sacred associations; the *recollective faculty* is to be engaged, from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same. Among the subjects of recollection is this of getting wealth, and Paul says that recollection is to be associated with distribution and sanctification.

I will assume that up to this point of the inquiry I have the full consent of the young man's mind and heart: the question now occurs, How *much* shall he "lay by him in store"? The young man is anxious to acknowledge God's goodness, and all he waits for is to ascertain the *measure* of his dedication. The answer is, "As God hath prospered him." There is not a word about tenth, or fifth, or twentieth. The whole New Testament arithmetic of the case is purely *moral*. The student is at liberty, indeed, to go back into the oldest biblical records, and to discover what grateful men did in dividing and dedicating property, yet, so far as the New Testament is concerned, not a word is spoken as to an arbitrary and unchangeable proportion. The spiritual law is, "as God hath prospered him." When the week has been unusually productive, the young man will "lay by" with unusual liberality; when

the gains have been small, the "store" will be small ; when there has been no gain there will be no dedication. All the details of working must be left to the individual conscience. It is a service of love, of gratitude, of memorial ; and the *heart* will soon arrange the best methods of marshalling details. A thousand difficulties might be suggested by *speculation* which would never be seen by *love*. I cannot pause to enumerate detailed methods of dealing with a weekly account ; all I venture to say is this ;—Man derives from God power to get wealth ; that he should consequently make some recognition of his obligation ; and that the most clear intimation of doing this is given by Paul,—“On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” It is replied that this “order” was given in relation to a *particular* case of benevolence. What then ? An *object* may be particular, when a *method* is universal. It is urged that this is the *only* instance in which the method is prescribed. What then ? How *often* must a word be spoken in order to make it true ? It is contended that there are difficulties in carrying out such an arrangement. What then ? Point out any duty in life which is unattended with difficulty ? If we work this plan up to the point that occasions insuperable difficulty, God will accept our service, and enrich the heart which renders it.

Let it be assumed that the plan of the Apostle is

carried out with all willingness and diligence, what results would mark its adoption?

1st. The fickleness and fitfulness of benevolence would be terminated. Benevolence is now very largely a question of impulse. Little or no preparation is made for the regular and constant administration of God's bounty.

2nd. The benevolent operations of the church would be immensely facilitated. If I have a case which calls for sympathy and substantial support, I should find no difficulty with men who systematically store a portion for God. They know exactly what they have in their treasury; they know how they determine the relative merits of cases; and in a moment their answer, always genial and kind, even when not affirmative, may be returned. As it is *now*, persons who go a-begging, as it is termed, are sometimes actually affronted as if they were public nuisances;—they make up their minds to be snapped at as if they were committing a species of masked felony.

3rd. The gratitude of the individual Christian would be kept in lively exercise. On the morning of every Lord's day he offers God a portion of his week's proceeds. Not only does he *pray* for the kingdom, he shows the reality of his word by the practical value of his *deed*. You may suggest that it is troublesome to be dividing every week; I answer, Is it troublesome to be *receiving* every week?

We speak of the "exceeding great and precious promises" abounding in God's word, but often overlook those which apply to our so-called *secular* life. Do you imagine that Almighty God is an unconcerned spectator of this service of dedication? Hear his word! "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." What then? what result will follow? "*So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*" We imagine that all God's benefactions are spiritual; we have shut Him out from the field and the vineyard; but hear His word! "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and He shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." We have cause and effect even in the religious administration of our worldly affairs:—"He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Yet our "sowing" must be done with a good motive, or the harvest will be scanty and worthless. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." Thus the *hidden* influences the *revealed*! What is the true motive? "The love of Christ constraineth us." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a

cup of cold water only *in the name of a disciple*, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

If you remember the Lord your God, He will remember *you*, for "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love."



OUTLINES AND HINTS.

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"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."—  
MATT. vi. 12.

THERE are two things which this text cannot mean.

(1) It cannot mean that sinful man is to set an example by which the divine administration is to be conducted; (2) It cannot mean that God's forgiveness of man is a mere equivalent for something that man himself has done.

In suggesting an interpretation of this prayer, let it be observed that this is not the *first* petition in the prayer. This fact sheds a morning-glory around this mystery of the night. *Who* are the men who say "Forgive us as we forgive"? They are men who have said—

- (1) Our *Father*.
- (2) Thy *kingdom come*.
- (3) Thy *will* be done on *earth*.

Suppose that these prayers have been answered in their experience; that they are fully pervaded by the filial spirit; that God's *kingdom*, in all its power, has come into their hearts; that God's *will* is done in them as it is done in angels: suppose that while

they have been yet speaking the answer has thrilled their suppliant souls ; think ye not that in such a moment of moral transfiguration they could pray that as they themselves had forgiven the past of their enemies, so God might forgive their debts and trespasses ? You say that you have had some such moments of moral ecstasy—you know somewhat of this passion of love—but that you soon *change*. True. But herein is the goodness of God, for *He takes our prayers at the very highest point of their inspiration*, and enlarges them into the fullest meaning they can bear, and He will answer the *highest* and not merely the *lowest* of our aspirations. He does not wait until our petition has shrivelled down to its meanest dimensions, and *then* answer it : when our mouth is opened *most widely*, he fills it with good things.

There is another point. Superficial men who listen to our prayers hesitate not to say that we are *inconsistent* because we do not *act* up to the high level of our petitions. When we tremblingly say “*as we forgive,*” they rudely exclaim, “*How does he forgive ? He did not forgive A, B, and C.*” This assault upon our consistency is unphilosophical, and may even be immoral. It is forgotten that we express in prayer not what we *are* but what we *would be* : prayer is not an attainment but an aspiration ; prayer is not *history*, it is *hope* ; prayer is not *victory*, it is *fighting*. When a man’s prayers and practices

are co-ordinate he need not pray any more. The *ideal* life is the life we set forth in prayer. Ideality is the dynamic force which drives the world-engine along the lines of progress. When a man's ideality is exhausted he may as well die. He is of no use in this sphere. We count not ourselves to have attained. We run, we stretch, we press toward the mark, we pursue an unattained and lofty ideality.

Apart from these considerations, it is to be remembered that forgiveness is a term much misunderstood. I lay this down as a guiding principle, *confession and contrition are the necessary conditions of forgiveness*. It is impossible to forgive a man, in the full sense in which we wish God to forgive us, apart from these conditions. You may refrain from taking vengeance upon him—you may treat him with indifference—you may never pronounce his name—you may not seek to bar his way in life—but apart from confession and petition, you can never truly forgive him so as to trust him again, and love him as though no injury had been inflicted upon you. God's own method is this: "If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to *forgive* us our sins." If any man will not forgive an honest penitent, I boldly declare him to be a stranger to the spirit of Jesus Christ.

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"And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing." "And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate."—LUKE xxiii. 8, 9, 11.

Why did Christ treat with *silence* a man who was "exceeding glad" to see Him? The subject is *Divine reserve; or, Christianity in relation to our mental moods.*

I. ALL SUBJECTS REVEAL THEMSELVES ACCORDING TO THE MENTAL MOOD IN WHICH THEY ARE EXAMINED. This is true of *nature, society, revelation.* II. THE DIVINE BEING DISCRIMINATES MAN'S MENTAL MOODS. Apparently Herod was in a most pleasing state of mind. He manifested no royal *hauteur*. He was cordial,—he was "exceeding glad:" why, then, that awful silence on the part of Christ? (a) Not fear of the judge; (b) not constitutional sullenness; (c) not consciousness of guilt. Why, then? *Because of a wrong mental mood on the part of Herod.* Why was Herod "exceeding glad"? Because "*he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.*" Christ would stoop to lift up a beggar's child, but would not work a miracle to please a king. III. CERTAIN MENTAL MOODS DEPRIVE MEN OF THE RICHEST

BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIANITY. What Herod *might* have known had he been in a proper state of mind! To whom will the Lord Jesus reveal Himself in tender speech or loving vision? Since He was silent before Herod, will He be communicative to *any* of His creatures? The answer is in Isa. lxvi. 2. This answer shows that *contrition* and *reverence* are the conditions on which suppliants return full-handed from the throne of grace. IV. MEN SELF-DEPRIVED OF THOSE BLESSINGS RESORT TO OPPOSITION. "Herod, with his men of war, set Him at nought," &c.

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"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."—LUKE xix. 10.

I. The most magnificent *historical fact*,—"Came."

II. The most appallingly *significant mission*,—"To seek."

III. The most transcendently *beneficent purpose*,—"To save."

IV. The most perfect description of the *state of humanity*,—"Lost."

(a) If Christ came, man's responsibility is increased. (b) If Christ came to *seek*, then seek ye the Lord while He may be found. (c) If Christ came to *save*, then the sinner is without excuse. (d) If Christ came to save the *lost*, then the worst may welcome Him. (e) Christ will *come*, will come to *seek*, once more.

"Thy kingdom come."—**MATT. vi. 10.**

I never felt the power of this petition more impressively than when once standing in the midst of a leafless wood. It was a clear day in early spring. Every cloud had been withdrawn from the canopy. The trees were perfectly naked, and their great branches were like arms outstretched in prayer. To me they seemed to be saying: "O spring, come and clothe us with beauty; summer, come and enrich us with thine abundance; we are patiently waiting for thee: through the long winter storm we have tarried for thee; thy kingdom come." I, too, a poor, leafless, human tree, lifted up my entreaty, saying, with a full heart, "O fairer Spring, O richer Summer, O purer Light, come clothe me, adorn me, make me beautiful,—O Saviour, Thy kingdom come."

(a) Human life is one great **WANT**; (b) this want should turn human life into one noble **ASPIRATION**; (c) this aspiration can only be noble as it is lifted up towards a **FATHER**; (d) this Father must be asked to come in all the power and splendour of a **KINGDOM**.

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Do you imagine that you are wise unto salvation simply because you have the *letter* of God's revelation in your hand? Fools are they who think thus. Look at the letter-carrier as he steps out of the post office in the morning. See what documents he

carries. Letters of business, letters of affection, letters of joy, letters of life, letters of death,—how *wise* he must be! Not at all. Of the inner word he knows nothing. So with men who know only the letter of the Bible. They read merely the address on the outside of the epistle; they have not broken the seal and read the messages which have come from their Father's heart. "*Search the Scriptures.*"

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"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."—**MATT. vi. 13.**

Is not this word "*thine*" a word expressive of selfishness? *Thine* the kingdom, *Thine* the power, *Thine* the glory! Thus all is made God's! What then? All is His by *right*. Yet what we foolishly think to be selfishness is, in reality, infinite generosity! How so? Though the last pronoun is *thine*, yet the first is *our*! The kingdom is His, the power is His, the glory is His, but *He himself* is *OURS*! "*Our Father—Thine is the kingdom.*" Thus "*all things are yours.*"

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"What can man do unto me?"—**PSA. cxviii. 6.**

This inquiry may be regarded—I. AS A CHECK ON HUMAN PRESUMPTION. We are always within hand-reach of our boundary. II. AS A WARNING AGAINST IMPIOUS DISTRUST. III. AS A REBUKE OF MORAL TIMIDITY. IV. AS AN ARGUMENT AGAINST ALL FALSE CONFIDENCES.

(a) It is well for man to know the range of his ability. (b) The power to *help* is limited, as well as the power to *hinder*. (c) *Each* man is the object of the divine care. What, then, becomes of the Deistic providence? (d) The most energetic persecutor of the good is engaged in a laborious attempt to do *nothing*. Whoso fears God has nothing else to fear.

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It is to be observed that the woman was impressed with the *charms* of the tree. Is there not in every man an eye which always sees something more beautiful in the possession of another than in his own? Man's depraved notion of *increase* is that rather of *addition* than of *development*. Get a hundred bushels out of your own acre, but touch not a grain belonging to your neighbour! A thing may be "good for food," "pleasant to the eyes," and "to be desired to make one wise;" but in themselves these are no reasons why we should appropriate it. There is a kind of beauty which is *laid upon* the cheek; there is another kind that *grows* upon it: the one is the factitious beauty of *addition*, the other the essential beauty of *development*. A *stolen* beauty perishes in the thievish grasp. The fruit was beautiful so long as it hung where God intended it to hang; but the moment it was taken into a forbidden sphere it was hideous and terrible as death!



We are re-enacting the Edenic apostasy every day (Gen. iii. 7—10). Every man is an Adam; every woman is an Eve. Every Adam and Eve break up their probationary Eden, and are driven into sterile wastes. We are fond of blaming the great federal Adam, as if we could have done better. He did just what we should have done. The severest of his critics would have ruined the loveliest Eden that ever bloomed in the thought of God. It is common, also, to blame Eve; but we seldom think how hard a thing it was to be *the world's first woman*. It was very trying to be in the great creation without a sister to speak to. She had no *history* to go by. The world had no library then, either in living form or written volume. There were no footprints to study. The woman was young; she had not *grown* her way up from infancy to maturity; she had an eye for the beautiful; she knew nothing of sisterhood; through the calm and balmy air of Eden there came no startling scream of warning; her hand bore no scar that could tell of battle and overthrow; the way to ruin was beflowered with a thousand beauties, and she sped through to its last enticing inch. She *fell*. Nor am I sorry, in one sense, that she did fall. That fall has given us deeper insight into God's heart than (as it appears to us who read things in the gray twilight of earth) we could otherwise have had. Though it is grievous to see the world's first

woman laughed at by triumphing devils—her cheek burning with shame's reddest blush—her tears drenching a face more lovely than the loveliest flower in her home, yet Faith foresees a day when that dear, shattered, broken, bleeding forerunner of us all shall be gathered up *by her own Son*, when devils shall have nothing more to laugh at, but shall see aspects of the divine government which shall cause them to quake for ever.

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A tree that is forbidden to one man may not be forbidden to another (Gen. ii. 17). *Every man has his own trial-tree*. Compared with the world of to-day, the world of Eden was small and poor. Man has been digging, and many a treasure he has brought up. Man has been diving, and many a felony he has committed in the palace-caverns of the sea. Man has been putting things together, and many a curious chain his craft has forged. Eden was a mere shell. Eden was but an alphabet. Eden was but a hint. As the world has multiplied its conquests and its treasures, so has it multiplied the possibilities of apostasy. Civilization has thinned down the partition between earth and hell. Man may now be tempted to drive down to perdition in a chariot of fine gold. There is now a separate serpent appealing to each separate *sense*. But for the WOMAN'S SEED there would be no clearing one's way through the dreadful coils into heaven—into peace!

## THE ALABASTER BOX.

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."—**MATT. xxvi. 6-13.**

Here is a woman—probably a poor woman—doing an action which excites the indignation of the whole church. Not a voice is heard in her favour except (sublime exception!) the voice of Jesus. In such a circumstance there must be something worth looking at. A minority which GOD approves must not be overpassed with heedlessness or contempt. A minority in the church, with JESUS at its head, is, in truth, an incarnation of Omnipotence. The wisdom in this case is with the few, the folly with the many; the wisdom is with *love*, not with *policy*—with *gratitude*, not with *calculation*.

The points of special interest are these:—

**I. THE ALL-SURRENDERING GENEROSITY OF LOVE**

The woman had an alabaster box of very precious ointment—only *one* box—and that solitary box she broke, and poured its pure nard on the only human head that had not lost its crown. I would detain the woman in that attitude of offering an oblation, and point her out as one of the most touching spectacles in all the wide compass of history. The gift has been in her heart for some days or weeks: again and again she has revolved the question of dispensation, and again and again she has remitted that question to her heart, till the set time of manifestation has arrived. The holy purpose was in her heart as the flower-seed is in the earth in the early spring-time. The seed is hidden, but is growing all the while; the gift is invisible, but every day adds to it some new fold of love; and at length the hour comes in which the germinating purpose reveals itself in a noble act, and it is as though some rough, unpitying wind had seized a new-born flower and threatened its young life. I wish to remember, however, the all-surrendering generosity of love. Love never puts its own name upon anything. Love has some object, *must* have some object, on whose shrine it lays its every possession. Love, warm, intelligent, growing love, keeps back nothing from God. Its beaming eyes look upon every treasure with a view of ascertaining its proper relation to the King. Love has endless resources, because it has endless sacrifices. We

make a grievous mistake when we say, "Such a man must be *rich*, because he *gives* so much to the cause of God:" he may not be rich in material possession, but he must be rich in *the spirit of self-sacrifice*. He has a wealthy *heart*, and *that* explains the bounty which astonishes and confounds those who have a prince's gold but a beggar's spirit. And yet nothing is more general, in a degenerate church, than the reasoning I refer to: if we see a high contribution attached to any name, we instinctively regard the sum as a public advertisement of what is *left behind*, rather than as a proof of self-denying, a self-impooverishing heart. The case before us is a most notable example: this woman's contribution was "an alabaster box of very precious ointment," and as we see it annexed to her name, we almost involuntarily say, "*Rich woman*;" for we have not yet risen to that sublime realization of love which can say, in all the fulness of its meaning, "*Rich heart*." No, brethren, in our mercantile age we order our affairs by a kind of spiritual "tare and tret." God gives us bounties without measure, and our first business too often is to take off an enormous amount of "tare," and put that into the hands of the usurer for ourselves; we thus reduce the "tret" to a minimum, and having done so, exclaim with self-satisfaction, "We can't afford it." For example, here is a man receiving as many as a thousand alabaster boxes per annum, and the first thing he

does is to determine that he will *save* five hundred of them—he will lay them by; then he will take his necessary expenses out of the remainder: having done so, he will look at the miserable residue, and say to the church and to God, “I can’t afford it.” Of course he cannot. Innocent and noble-minded man, how can he? But will such a man answer one question, viz., *If this woman had laid away her one box of ointment for her own personal use, how much could she have afforded?* Ah, she knew not the spiritual arithmetic to which I refer. Imprudent woman! She actually gave Jesus both the tare and the tret!

Take a second point,—

## II. THE MORAL BLINDNESS OF A PRUDENTIAL POLICY IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST.

“To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.” And according to Mark, the indignation took a more specific form,—“Why was this waste of the ointment made? for it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor.” There are men who can never take other than an arithmetical view of things. They account themselves sharp if they can save a shilling from going in what they call a wrong way. They are “prudent” men, “safe” men, men of discretion and judgment, men gifted in mental arithmetic, who in a trice can give you the arithmetical value of a

poem, or put Love into scales and tell you her exact substance in avoirdupois or troy weight. They are the keen economists of the church; they get near enough to Christ to ascertain the texture of His garments, and to calculate the value of His seamless vesture. You find such men in all churches, and a superficial world calls them sharp, shrewd, and successful. Such men are, I suppose, of some sort of use, or surely God would have turned the dust to better purpose than to have set it roaming about in the form of human pence tables and flesh-and-bone arithmetics.

Then look how these prudent men give themselves much uneasiness. "They had indignation;" or, in the language of the modern church, they were "pained," "grieved," "distressed," and almost irrecoverably "shocked." Alas! the modern church has weak nerves. But some people, possibly, take a pride in being easily "pained:" the act serves to show that they keep a sensitive conscience, and that their feelings are the true spiritual barometers. Brethren, let *us* be more manly, more natural, more heroic, more like Christ. It is a pity when Christ's followers become more sensitive than Christ himself. When the first voice raised against an action is not the voice of Jesus, but the voice of Judas, we should be careful how we rank ourselves. Judas is no authority in ethics. His ability is the ability of a tiger to balance himself properly before the fatal pounce.

Mark the word which a calculating discipleship employs—"waste"—"to what purpose is this waste?" As if anything could be wasted on Jesus! As if the treasures of the whole universe could be too much for that sacred head! Such men have no idea of the value of so-called little acts. Their love can flow in one channel only. If a subscription be given to *their* cause they can understand it, and value it, and liberally commend it; but if love should take *some other* course their hearts are afire with celestial "indignation." A box of ointment given to *the poor* would have been right, but a box of ointment given to Him who became poor that poverty might be for ever annihilated was an infringement of the natural order of things, an innovation on the conceptions of the church.

There is a point of criticism here most singularly suggestive. The same word in the original is used to signify both *waste* and *perdition*; and if we connect this circumstance with another, we shall apprehend the idea I wish to present. "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but *the son of perdition*;" and this very son of perdition was the man who, on another occasion, and probably on this, called a sacrifice "waste," and vehemently maintained the claims of the poor. There, then, is the startling fact before us, that *the men who denominate other people's services "waste" are themselves the most likely to be cast away as the*



*refuse of the universe.* And is not the same thing occurring continually,—occurring before our own eyes? He who blames faults in others is the very man who is often marred by these very faults himself,—the denouncer of “waste” may be the “son of perdition.”

Take a third point :—

### III. THE ALL-COMPREHENDING WISDOM OF THE SAVIOUR'S JUDGMENT.

“Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always.”

In this calm judgment Jesus Christ does three things :—

First. *He shows His anxiety for the peace of all who attempt to serve Him.* “Why trouble ye the woman?” Why needlessly excite questions of conscience? &c.

Second. *He shows His sympathy with the poor.* Does He condemn the voice that pleads for the children of poverty?

Third. *He shows that every age brings its own opportunities for doing good.* “Ye have the poor always with you.” No man need be hoarding his goods under the pretence that he has no means of doing good, that no door of usefulness is open, and the like. Wherever you find a man ignorant of the plan of salvation, you find a mission-field; wherever

you find a man in honest poverty, you find an opportunity for the exercise of benevolence, &c.

Take a fourth point:—

#### IV. THE ASSURED IMMORTALITY OF GOODNESS.

“Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” Goodness has in it the breath of immortal life. The memory of the wicked shall rot, fall away, drop off, and its recollection shall utterly cease, so that in the coming ages there is a period when devils and devildom will be unknown to the consciousness of an adoring universe.

(1) Only a divine being can guarantee immortality to any action. (2) In immortalizing goodness, we have an assurance of a happy future. (3) The nature of a being is known by the nature of the actions whose memory he would perpetuate.

In bringing this meditation to a close, the subject gives a word (1) to those who have few resources; (2) to those who form a superficial estimate of the services of their brethren; (3) to those who would serve the most glorious Master; (4) to those who are waiting for opportunities of doing good; (5) and to those who would leave a memory to be praised.

Noble woman! generous spirit! farewell. We know not thy name, but 'tis written in heaven,

and thy noble deed shall be heard of in the hymns of the church's remotest age.

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#### CHRIST AND THE PHARISEES.

"Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad."—**MATT. xii. 22—30.**

Imagine the spectacle—a *man* "possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb." Here is more of Satan's work. His way may be tracked by the ruins he has wrought. Blood-pools are his footprints. Darkness is his mantle. His whole force is directed against the temple of manhood. As I gaze on this melancholy sight, it speaks to me, saying, "I am but a

picture of what Satan would make the whole world!" He would enthrone himself on every intellect. He would poison all love-streams. He would close the eye, that it might no longer dwell upon the glories of the universe. Every song of hope, every anthem of joy, he would silence; and when all men were fully under his dominion, he would announce his triumph with shouts of scornful laughter, and gaze with pride on a universal hell. I wish you, then, to take this demon-bound, blind, dumb man, as a sample of Satan's work—as an indication of what he would make of yourselves but for the restraint of a merciful and omnipotent God.

I shall use this incident,—

I. TO SHOW THE GOOD MAN'S RELATION TO THE  
WORLD OF WANT.

This world is a wide one. It embraces the physical, mental, and moral nature of man. The world's great empty hand is evermore thrust out in token of deep and urgent necessity; and its imploring, want-revealing eye is ever looking for a Helper. You need not force your way to the abodes of poverty, squalor, and misery, to find lean, hungry, eager *want*. You may find it in every home, because you may find it in every heart. It has its manifold modifications indeed, but there it is—its bosom an aching void, its voice an everlasting appeal. Into this world of want the gentle Saviour—the Good Man—came; and as I observe Him,

with all the dignity of essential divinity, and yet with the tremulous tenderness of sympathetic manhood, walking up and down among the children of men—gazing upon them through His pure tears, shedding upon them His living smile, touching them with His brotherly hand, and speaking to them with His voice of love—I see in Him, and His work, the Good Man's relation to the world of want.

And around this relation many ideas—blushing with divinest beauty—cluster. Take three of them:—

First. *The Good Man is approachable.* He did not isolate Himself in gloomy grandeur, and do His deeds of mercy at an immeasurable distance. He might have done so. He might have hidden Himself, either in a pavilion of light or a tabernacle of darkness, and scattered His blessings thence. Instead of this chilling isolation, we find the holy Saviour mingling with men—communing with the inquirer, hearkening to the needy, feeding the hungry, and blessing all. Even little children could find access to the arms which were to be stretched in sacrificial death, and infancy was not too feeble to sustain the tender blessing of a tender Saviour. Do you ever find Him too weary to help the helpless? Does He ever plead His own indulgence as a reason for not receiving others? Never!—blessed be His sacred name—never!

Second. *The Good Man is sympathetic.* Jesus

did not do His miracles as mere feats of power—as displays of proud ability. He often came to His work with tears. His sympathy trembled with compassion, and dissolved in showers, before He put forth the arm of His irresistible power! I have often been struck with the manner in which power was preceded by sympathy. It might have been otherwise. Miracles need not have been softened, mellowed, beautified by tenderness. The tear of sympathy need not have preceded the shout of power at the grave of Lazarus. But it did, and we thank God for it! God walked forth on the wings of the power, but man trembled in the tear. It was a glorious union. Power with a tear in its eye,—the eyelids of Omnipotence wet with the tears of sympathy. Ay, that is mystery—that is God!

Third. *The Good Man is unostentatious.* “And He healed him.” Such is the simple phraseology in which this stupendous act is transmitted to posterity! What a mass of meaning is condensed into that little phrase! The devils banished—sight revelling in countless glories—mouth opened in song,—all wrapt up in that simple statement,—“And He healed him”! Many a man has made more demonstration in the simplest act of charity than Christ made in His sublimest, His world-amazing deeds. The angel named Charity, night-ingale-like, sings her soft, rich, mellow song in the

hush of midnight, with few listeners but the silent, bright-eyed stars. Love, charity, sympathy, and the other celestial sisters, run their errands noiselessly. They do not "strive or cry, neither doth any man hear their voice in the streets:" they are gentle-handed—"the bruised reed" they never broke; they are tender-hearted—"the smoking flax" they never quenched! They trouble not the goddess Fame to sound their victories. They care not for the flaunting banners of earthly conquest. They can wait: when the world's din has ceased, they shall break forth into sweet, melodious, immortal song.

Such is the Good Man in his relation to the world of want. What Christ was, we should be in our degree. We must, indeed, move at a humble distance, but our business is to move in the same direction. We should be approachable, sympathetic, unostentatious, and thus reflect the splendour of a peerless example.

I use this incident,—

## II. TO SHOW THE DEVIL'S RELATION TO GOOD MEN.

I take those captious Pharisees as a type of the devil; and I think not unjustly so, for they are doing the devil's work. Regarding them in this capacity, I am warranted in making this second use of the incident,—How did those devil's men use Christ?

First. *They resorted to personal abuse*,—"This fellow." Nothing easier than to use bad names; but bad names are bad arguments. When your opponent is driven to personal abuse he is driven to his wits' end, and you may safely leave him. Never throw mud. You *may* miss your mark, but you *must* have dirty hands. "This fellow" is no argument, it is scurrility—it is a faint spark of hell-fire; the man who throws that would throw something deadlier if he could.

Second. *They ignored the value of the greatest blessings*. They could not deny that the devil was gone, but were they *glad* that he was gone? So with the enemies of good men now. Good men are doing great deeds in the name of God, but there are many detractors. Even ministers are occasionally guilty of this habit of detraction in relation to their brother ministers. They cannot bear that their brethren should cast out *too many devils*: they don't care for an imp or two being expelled, but there is a point beyond which fraternal jealousy shows its glaring eyes, its clenched teeth, and its pitiless sword. Such men always endeavour to make a brother's success appear as little as possible. If, by changing an accent or modifying an emphasis, they can reduce a little, they are prone to avail themselves of these pitiful trickeries. Be it known however, that such is not the gospel spirit: it may be robed in the silk of orthodoxy, and bound with



the purest white, but it is not heaven-born, and cannot be heaven-tending.

Third. *They insulted the plainest common sense.* Jesus knew their thoughts, and exposed the hollowness of their reasoning. He tore their sophistry to rags. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" In this pointed manner did Jesus show how common sense was outraged. But what is common sense to men who have an object to gain? They are determined to be at a certain point, and, if common sense stand in the way, cut it down—bury it beneath the most scornful insults, and gain their point. It is even so with the enemies of the cross now; they can trample upon the simplest rules of argument, they can defame the holy name of reason, and turn the sacred temple of conscience into a place of fraudulent merchandise.

Fourth. *They attempted to trace good results to a bad cause.* What do such men care for philosophy? It is nothing in their way to ascribe good to evil; they know that a corrupt fountain can bring forth pure streams,—they know that "cause and effect" is an old sophism, hatched by a school of sleepy-headed, brooding philosophers. It is the same with the enemies of Christ now. When a man is con-

verted, and becomes a new creature, there are many ready to ignore the Holy Spirit, and the "precious blood" of Jesus, and to attribute the change to education, or example, or even to the devil himself,—to any one rather than to God.

Fifth. *They falsified the deepest and truest instincts of human nature.* "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" Still, you observe, they plunge headlong into ruin; they have overthrown common sense; they have laughed philosophy to scorn, and now let parental affection go too. The keystone once off, the wall soon disappears. They are quite willing that their children should be proclaimed the emissaries of Satan—anything; anything that Christ's honour might be smitten, and Christ's heart stabbed. They were bent on murder, and whatever or whoever stood in their way must bear the consequences of their fiery madness.

Now the *moral* of the whole is of easy deduction. Let us examine ourselves, and determine whether we can be justly numbered with those infatuated, perverse, thrice-blind partisans. We scorn their littleness, but are we really larger? We lament their madness, but are we really wiser? We denounce their severity, but do we display a nobler and truer geniality? See what bigotry would do; and as you gaze, shudder and be wise. She would trample all that is holy in the mire—she would

bring aid from the bottomless pit—she would swear to the hurt of countless millions—she would drown the universe in its own blood, rather than vacate her accursed throne or relax her iron grasp. I implore you, brethren, to beware of this black-hearted bigotry. Whatever of bigotry there may be in the so-called church, *it never came from Christ*. Christ healing every applicant—Christ teaching every listener—Christ bidding all welcome—Christ upon the awful tree, drinking the cup of death for every man, is an eternal protest against the spirit of a shrivelling, desiccating, hell-born bigotry.

The Saviour, having shown the folly, the madness, and malignity of the reasoning of His enemies, enunciates a doctrine of awful import: the sentence rings in the world like a great truth-bell; hear it,—“He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.” This is a heart-testing application. Hence-on, we know the impossibility of religious neutrality. You are either a gatherer or a scatterer. There is no such thing as “doing no harm.” The great world is ranged in two divisions. Retire into the court of Conscience, and determine for yourselves. I pause a moment—dread moment—that you may ascertain your moral state.

Are you *against* Him? Lay down your weapons of rebellion, and surrender to His power and His

love. He will receive you graciously and love you freely. Tell Him how you have sinned, and ask Him to forgive. The cry of earnestness will awake the response of love. Arise, by God's help, and run to the Saviour's cross. Pardon is there—and there, too, are purity and peace. Ask for pity in the Saviour's name, and cry for pardon through the Saviour's blood; and surely as the fervent prayer wingeth its flight to the mercy-seat, shall love descend and write upon your heart the Saviour's name.

Are you *with* Him? Thank God! With Him? Then you fight under the banner of love, and your weapons are the steel of heaven. "With Him"? Then, amid pelting storms and roaring thunders, temptations, strifes, bereavements, sorrows, you are safe. "With Him"? Then "labour is rest and pain is sweet," and your trembling pulse the pledge of immortality. "With Him"? Then you *shall* be with Him—with Him for ever, amid the glory of the better land. We shall see the Master whose name we have borne, and in whose service we have toiled. The first beam flashed from His countenance shall strike eternal morning into our hearts; His welcome on the heavenly shore shall cast into oblivion our deepest sorrows; the first grasp of His hand shall insure our everlasting safety. This hope cheers us in the hour of sadness; this hope sings to us in the night of solitude; and as the mornin-

star (bright jewel of the dawn) melts away in the radiance of the advancing sun, so shall this hope mingle its gladdening smile with the blaze of eternal day.

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#### CREDENTIALS TESTED BY SERVICE.

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto Him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."—*MATT. xxi. 28—32.*

The question as to Christ's *authority* had just been started by the chief priests and elders. Smitten with wonder as they gazed on the marvellous conquests of His power, and unable to comprehend the secret of His mastery over mind and matter alike, they determined to put the question directly and broadly before Him. Hence they said, "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who

gave Thee this authority?" They could not deny the *miracles*, yet they were uncertain as to the *source* of the power which accomplished them, and if they could find out *anything* in Jesus Christ which was suspicious, they would be able to overturn His claims to the Messiahship. They could not find fault with the *works* themselves; there they *were*; open, patent, self-revealing, and self-defending; and, failing to find any blemish in the *effect*, they attempted to invalidate the *cause*. It was nothing to *them* that *great and glorious blessings* had accrued to the human family through the ministry of Jesus; their business was to find a *flaw* in that ministry, to ascertain whether the minister himself was armed with the proper credentials—whether he had entered by the ordinary gate; for if they could find that he had in any degree failed to carry out their own notions of authority, they would have a plea against Him which would be all-prevailing with a superstitious and priest-bound age.

Christ saw the drift of the question—knew exactly the process of reasoning which would be founded upon a certain answer—and, therefore, resolved to take the wise in their own craftiness, and surround the proud with the darkness of confusion. He consequently propounded a problem which was like a two-edged sword, which they were too glad to drop from their trembling fingers:

—"The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"

Yet, while Jesus declined to give a *direct* answer to the question, He set forth the *truth* of the subject in the form of a parable—in fact, in two parables,—and that truth we are now to elicit, interrogate, receive, and love.

The subject, then, I would put thus :—The *source* of Christ's authority is revealed by the *uses* to which He puts that authority. And this idea we might expand into a more general statement,—*The true worker ever leaves his service to be its own exponent and defence.*

Approaching the subject, then, in this manner, we have to inquire, *What are the uses to which Christ puts His authority?* And if the *uses* be divine, we shall have a strongly presumptive argument that the *authority* itself is divine.

#### I. CHRIST USES HIS AUTHORITY IN ASSERTING GOD'S PATERNAL RELATIONSHIP TO MAN.

The parable immediately before us is constructed on the fullest recognition of this fact. "A certain man had two *sons*,"—"whether of them twain did the will of his *father*?" Now I assert, as a key-principle in the history of Jesus, that at all times He taught the sublime doctrine of the *Fatherhood of God*, and the very teaching of this doctrine is itself a revelation of the nature and the origin of the *authority* by which He taught. Do you ask,

"Whence comest thou?" He answers, You may learn whence I come when I tell you that God is your *Father*. I came out from the Father to teach His Fatherhood. I left the bosom of the Father that I might tell all men His true nature. Learn, then, that I come from *God* by remembering that God's *Fatherhood* is the central fact in my teaching.

By teaching the Fatherhood of God, Christ incidentally, but most convincingly, asserts the divinity of His authority. Jesus does not so represent the Unseen One as to repel men from His service, but contrariwise continually seeks to win the hearts of men to receive Him as their eternal and loving FATHER. Had He dwelt on the majesty, the awfulness, the everlasting royalty, and unapproachable glory of the Invisible Godhead, the case would have been vitally different. *Wherever* He speaks of God, He speaks of Him as a Father. If ever He reverts to the *power* of God, it is to show how it is exercised in love; never once does He break out into a hymn of praise to the abstract power, glory, majesty of the great Creator; but every reference to these is to show that they are associated with unfathomable pity, with unlimited and changeless love.

Now I cannot but hold that *such* teaching is divine in its authority, self-evidentially divine in its origin. And the more tenaciously do I hold it when I remember that Christ asserts the *universal*



Fatherhood of God. There are *two sons* here, and these two sons represent different classes—the *avowedly disobedient*, and the *professedly reverential*.

(Show the necessity and awfulness of *evangelical* distinctions.)

Still God is the *Creator-Father* of all humankind, and through Jesus He would become the *Redeemer-Father* of universal man ; and Jesus goes everywhere enlightening, uplifting, and restoring men, and will never rest until He has folded all hands in prayer, and taught children of every age and clime to say, "OUR FATHER which art in heaven."

## II. CHRIST USES HIS AUTHORITY IN CALLING ALL MEN TO SPIRITUAL SERVICE.

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." A call to *work* must be divine. I mean this statement to apply to *all* kinds of true work ; to work that is called *secular*, and to work that is called *sacred*. All true work is divine. A workless world is a joyless world. Inactivity is the first condition of melancholy, melancholy is the twilight of madness. Specially is this true of spiritual service ; *any religion which bids man desist from work cannot be heavenly in authority*.

There are two things about God's call to work :—

(1) God fixes the *time*—"to-day;" (2) God determines the *sphere*—"my vineyard."

Let us, then, apply this test to the religion we

profess to enjoy. Does it lull us to rest? Does it approve our sealed eyelids? Does it enclose us in ourselves, and shut off the necessitous world? Beware! beware! Is it, on the other hand, continually affecting our hearts with pity for a fallen race? Is it a never-silent cry for labour? Does it plead the cause of humanity? Does it, like the flying orbs, find its repose in its very activity? Rejoice! rejoice! When men ask you by what "authority" you hold your religion, and who "gave" you "that authority," let it not be your trifling business to enter into a strife of words, but show rather the *results* of your faith, the *works* which it constrains you to do, for *they* bear the image and superscription of GOD. Such a reply is ever best to those who live for controversy. Drop the battle-axe. Hush the roar of artillery. Let the "by what *authority*" be answered by the "go WORK."

III. CHRIST USES HIS AUTHORITY IN PROCLAIMING THE WILL OF GOD AS THE ONLY STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" This question applies a test. This is one of those inquiries which turn every heart into its own judge. I ask, then, is not the establishment of such a rule a hint of the nature of the *authority* by which it was spoken? Are there not certain words which at once prove themselves divine? Take such a word as "Do unto others as ye would

that others should do unto you," and is not that word radiant with lights which were never struck by the fingers of art? Is it not winged with such pinions as those with which the angels fly?

(The will that *calls* is the will that *tests*.)

#### IV. CHRIST USES HIS AUTHORITY IN MARKING MORAL DISTINCTIONS.

"Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

This is an *authoritative* voice. It is the voice of one who stands at the portals of the kingdom of heaven, and determines the character of those who shall enter in.

- (1) Responsibility is measured by opportunity.
- (2) Opportunity is given to all classes.
- (3) Only the obedient can enter the kingdom.

We are thus brought round to the original question, "By what authority doest Thou these things?" And Jesus answers, Let My *works* testify; if you believe not My labours, you would not believe My credentials; judge Me by the *uses* I make of My power, rather than be anxious to analyze the power itself; I tell you God is man's *Father*, man's mission is to *work*, man's work should be determined by God's *will*, and that your relation to that will

determines all the *distinctions* which a righteous God will stoop to recognize. And in the utterance of these great principles the wise hearer will find the royalty and divineness of the authority I wield.

I address two classes,—

First, *Those who have unfulfilled vows resting upon them*,—"I go."

Second, *Those who have openly refused to serve God*,—"I will not."

Man! stand not *outside* of Christ, asking the *questions* of an ambitious but vain philosophy; but look at the glorious *works* by which the Son of God has surrounded Himself, and see in these works of love and mercy the best proof that Jesus is the veiled Jehovah.

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#### MORAL EDUCATION.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."—MATT. v. 21, 22.

I. THE MORAL EDUCATION OF THE WORLD HAS BEEN CONDUCTED PROGRESSIVELY. Here are two voices. The subject in both cases is *murder*: the first voice says, "Thou shalt not *kill*;" the second

voice says, "Thou shalt not be *angry*." Observe (1) *Literal obedience to ancient legislation is no proof of spiritual life*. Take this very law as an illustration : not a man amongst us has *killed* a human being, and therefore *so far* we have been obedient to ancient legislation ;—but of what avail is such obedience if we have cherished malice, uncharitableness, illiberality of purpose and interpretation? Our very *hearts* may have been turned into slaughterhouses. (2) *As moral education is progressive, we should ever be contemplating advancement*. "I count not myself to have apprehended," &c. Let no man deport himself as though he were a finished scholar in God's school.

II. PROGRESS IN MORAL EDUCATION REVEALS THE INSIDIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF MISANTHROPY. This text may be regarded as revealing the possibilities of misanthropy. We here see how the germ grows into the full upas. Man *begins* with petulance, peevish fretfulness, irrational and unjustifiable anger,—that is the *first* stage : then he advances far enough in misanthropy to describe his brother by abusive and offensive epithets,—that is the *second* stage : then he pronounces his brother a fool, looks upon society as insane, and holds his kindred in contempt : such is the germ—such the tree : misanthropy begins in anger and culminates in murder !

III. THE PROGRESS OF MORAL EDUCATION IS THE ONLY TRUE HOPE FOR THE BEST INTERESTS OF

HUMAN NATURE. Christianity ever contemplates and works for the *amelioration* of the human race. I regard this fact as involving a sublimer demonstration of its divinity than all the miracles which solemnized its inaugural epoch. The universe is merely a handful of dust, but the human heart is quick with immortal force. Jesus was the true philanthropist, and His religion is the true philanthropy (1 John iii. 17; iv. 20, 21; Matt. xxii. 39; John xiii. 34, 35). Christianity is thus shown to be the man-to-man uniting power.

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#### THE HINDERER.

“Satan hindered us.”—1 THESS. ii. 18.

I. SATAN IS AWARE OF THE GOOD PURPOSES OF THE HEART. He makes it his business to know them, &c. “He goeth about,” &c. Though we cannot explain the *reasons*, we know the *fact*. This should compel (a) self-scrutiny, (b) self-wrestling, (c) self-fortification. II. SATAN SEEKS TO FOIL THE AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN. He *hindered* the apostles, (a) because their purposes were opposed to his sovereignty; (b) because he can more successfully combat *purposes* than *performances*. He began in the *mind* of the Apostle: he embraces the *first* opportunity. III. SATAN ASSAILS THE MOST EMINENT WORKERS IN THE CHURCH. In this case he hindered the *Apostle*.

Before them, he fought with their *Master*. No man is too high in office to be safe from Satanic assault. (a) *Satan can adapt his suggestions to the particular state of the tempted*,—mind, circumstances, antecedents, tendencies. (b) *Satan has vast resources at command*. Hosts of bad men do his bidding, &c. He can excite *persecutions*, &c. He has long had dominion over every heart, &c. APPLICATION : Be sober, be vigilant, resist the devil, examine your reasons for not working in the church, &c. God will *bruise* Satan, &c.

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“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”—

JOHN i. 23.

Fire from the heavenly altar burns in the heart of the son of Zacharias. His lips have been touched as with a sceptre of lightning, and as his eye is uplifted it is seen to flash with the energy of a grand, stern purpose. His breast heaves as heaves the breast of one who has received tidings from the high court of heaven. He is a rugged child of the wilderness. He is, indeed, a courtier, but it is in the palaces of heaven that he is known as such. The goddess of earthly fashion could descry no refinement in the son of the desert. His face is channelled as though floods of tears had found there an accustomed bed. His step is firm as the step of one who has business, and is determined to do it.

His garb would be accounted mean by those who live in kings' houses; yet in all his barbaric and terrible grandeur there hath not been born of woman a greater than John the Baptist!

His mission opens. Soft words would not be at home on that lightning-tipped tongue. Apologies could not be forced through that fire-girt mouth, nor could these granitic lips shape themselves into the utterance of compliments. Looking at him ere he speaks, you would conclude that when he *does* speak he will make the oppressor cringe: his words must be double-edged: his very *blessings* will come with an energy which will tell of his power to *curse*: could *tears* stand in those blazing eyes, they might be heard to hiss as waters on the fire of an unconquerable purpose.

The moment of action has arrived. He walks through all "the country about Jordan," and startles the population with the thunder-cry, "Repent! repent!" The multitudes answer, "We have Abraham to our father." John replies, "Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Thus at one terrible blow he demolishes an ancient and oft-trusted fortress. John dealt not in the confectionery of language: his words were as stern as the crisis was solemn. "Repent"! "O generation of vipers"! "the axe is laid to the root



of the tree;" "the wrath to come,"—such were the black and bitter waters which gushed from that desert rock. Strange that *such* words should have been employed in heralding a SAVIOUR! John appears rather to have been the trumpeter of a *destroyer*. We are tempted to look behind so stern a messenger, under the impression that we shall descry the dim outline of a gigantic and irresistible foe. John comes not as morning's mild and lustrous star, preluding the superior orb, but like the terrible storm, which clears the atmosphere, and inaugurates a season of purity and calm. You expected his footstep to be succeeded by the earth-shaking tread of mailed destroyers, and behold, the *Saviour* quietly emerges. You expected his harsh tones to be followed by the crashing thunders of doom, and behold, there ariseth one whose voice is faintly heard in the streets.

Thus mysteriously and grandly is the Divine Man foretold. Peace is cradled in that storm. Out of that tempest-chariot there shall step man's BROTHER and SAVIOUR.

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"Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him."—

MATT. ii. 13.

Guilt cannot bear the presence of purity. Rapacity dreads the eye of justice. To a corrupt heart the gentle glance of a babe is a two-edged sword.

"To destroy Him"! Such is the policy of conscious guilt. In *argument* it is outstripped; summoned into the court where *light* holds sovereignty, it shrinks and trembles; forced into the presence of *love*, it blushes, stammers, and would gladly retreat. What then becomes its cry? "Destroy!" This word "destroy" falls with appalling familiarity from the lips of despots; but, blessed be God! no tyrant's sword can injure the angel whose triple name is Truth, Purity, and Love.

Mark the significance of Herod's cruel purpose. Hardly had the life-blood become accustomed to the Saviour's veins, when the tiger panted for the warm and living stream. Wherever you find the footprint of Jesus, you find the footprint of the tiger near. Mark the crouching form, the fiery, glaring eye; upon them are the words, "*To destroy Him!*" "To destroy Him" is the meaning of every frown which darkens the brow of scribe and Pharisee; "to destroy Him" is the summary of that fierce dispute now raging in the Sanhedrim; and if you ask that swelling throng, hurrying on to Golgotha, what purpose heaves its heart, you may be answered with fiendish laughter, "*To destroy Him!*"

The race of Herods is not extinct. There are men who would crush every life of purity and moral power. They are so enslaved by selfishness, so circumscribed by an hereditary creed, so jealous of prescriptive rights, that they seek the new-born

child of hope and promise to "destroy" it. They dread the forth-puttings of new power; they affect a haughty contempt of those whose banner bears "a strange device;" their scornful laughter is the only spear they dare employ; in the madness of their infatuation they plunge the sword of their slander into the purest bosoms; yet, thank God! while these vengeful Herods are steeping Bethlehem in blood, the men of a glorious future are gaining strength in the Egypt of retirement and divine tuition.

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"There standeth one among you, whom ye know not."—

JOHN i. 26.

The Jordan's banks are now thronged with multitudes who are seeking "the baptism of repentance." The unceasing inquiry related to the long-expected king. The universe was about to bring forth its greatest birth. Would the heavens open, and God visibly descend? Would the Jews, by one emancipating wrench, be delivered from their oft-lamented bondage? Would the air rend with triumph-songs, as lightning smote the throne of the Cæsars, and blasted the oppressor in ignominious ruin? None knew. Meanwhile the Jordan is freely used. A deputation from the priests and Levites confronts the fiery Baptist. The inquiries and answers are short, but bursting with significance:

"Who art thou?" John's answer is negative—"I am not the Christ." "Art thou Elias?" John's time permits but three monosyllables—"I am not." "Art thou that prophet?" John answered "No." Such mysterious communications added to the perplexity of all. Even when John revealed his positive function, impenetrable darkness veiled its meaning: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." In a few pulses more the momentous secret was disclosed. The Baptist, assuming the attitude of one who is about to speak an illuminative word, deepened the already painful attention of the multitudes; not a breathing was heard, not an eye moved; with a deliberation almost tantalizing to a fevered host, John proceeded to say, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; HE IT IS!" The ensuing scene others may describe. The quick, far-reaching glances; the thousand inquiries, swelling as the tumultuous noise of advancing tides; "the hurrying to and fro; the whispering with white lips," I cannot reproduce; my business is to help you to snatch a lesson from John's thrilling answer. Men are prone to seek a *distant* Christ. Humanity has a passion for pilgrimages. Few men dig for "hid treasures" at *home*. With many persons riches are never *here*, they are always *yonder*. Others never look for genius or power among their familiar acquaintance. Let me, then, implore you to re-

member that there is deep and glorious significance in the words, "*there standeth one among you.*" These words apply to Christ *now* as truly as when the Baptist uttered them. "Behold, *I stand* at the door, and knock." You need not, therefore, go far to seek Christ; He is a God nigh at hand. We need not go far in search of the elements of *happiness*; the joyous Angel is standing by your side in the person of the LORD JESUS.

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"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee."—MATT. iv. 12.

By connecting this "casting" and "departing," you will be enabled to realize the meaning of John's declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease." As John enters the prison, Jesus enters Galilee; as the minor light dwindles, the superior orb pours forth His splendour. I refer to this as one of many illustrations of that principle in the divine government, by which a succession of true teachers has ever been insured. Moses sleeps on Nebo; but Joshua assumes the leadership of Israel. Elijah ascends to the celestial city in his fiery chariot; but Elisha is adorned with the symbol of his power. So John is dragged to prison, and Christ continues the great work. The race of true ministers cannot be destroyed. Individual members of the ministry may be slain, but the divine priesthood is immortal.

Heed not the wild cry of the alarmist. The *church* is not in danger—"the gates of hell cannot prevail against it." I shall as soon believe that an insect can unseat the King of day as that human malignity can successfully impede the progress of Christ. The slaying of Christ is but the depositing of a prolific seed in a fruitful soil; and so is the martyrdom of every *Christ-like* man. The sepulchre of the faithful is the womb of Hope. The cemetery of the church is the cradle of Faith. The blood-pools of persecution are the stimulants of Love.

Haste ye to the eastern horizon, and forbiddingly shake your puny fist in the face of the sun; with quick step rush to the coast, and order the everlasting tide into silence: and when the sun retires before your frown, and the sea-pulse pauses at your bidding, *then* take heart, you may prevent Christ "departing into Galilee"!

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"And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him."—  
MARK iii. 13, 14.

Linger for a moment in contemplation of this holy scene. A new chapter opens in the divine history. Jesus, having preached in many synagogues, and cured many diseases, began to organize a brotherhood. Let us present ourselves at this first ordination service. The temple is the temple of nature;

the Priest is the only begotten of the Father; the witnesses, mayhap, were the angels who sang at Bethlehem. The great multitude swarms on the sides of that hallowed mountain, while the inaugural service proceeds on an eminence which the throngs are not permitted to attain. Words we may not hear. The solemn charge was sacred to the chosen alone. Hence-on Christ is surrounded by men bearing the distinctive appellation of "His disciples." Though we might not hear the charge to the ministers, we are permitted to hear a sermon to the people. Descending from the peak of ordination, He sits on a lower eminence, and, "seeing the multitudes, He opened His mouth, and taught them." How can I pronounce the word with which the sermon opened? I can imagine somewhat of the pathos and tenderness with which it fell from His hallowed lips; but it becomes cold and rough as it falls from our tongue. It is a word rather to be *looked at* than re-uttered. It is a picture, a fountain, a sun, a psalm unutterable! That word was "BLESSED"! This word is but one of many; hear the musical stream of benedictions:—"Blessed are the poor in spirit"—"Blessed are they that mourn"—"Blessed are the meek"—"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness"—"Blessed are the merciful"—"Blessed are the pure in heart"—"Blessed are the peacemakers"—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righte-

ousness' sake." O ye lovers of the beautiful, know ye of aught in the wide domain of your goddess to compare with this pellucid stream of blessings? If I ask you to indicate the *sources* of your broad and noble rivers, you demand that I should climb the steep hills, and force my way into the chambers of the solitudes far from the din of cities; and, pointing to some scanty rill which the thirsty eagle might drain, were it not for the spring beneath it, you declare *that* to be one of the sources of the great Amazons of commerce. Let me now disclose the secret birthplace of a nobler river than ever sought the bosom of the sea. Am I asked to show the source of that river of christian beneficence, enterprise, and progress which fertilizes and beautifies the world? I demand that you accompany me to the mountains on which the Saviour taught, and the hill on which the Saviour died; and, pointing you to the streamlets of His doctrines and the rills of His blood, I should declare these to be the inexhaustible sources of the river which shall gladden the dwellers on every land.

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"From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him."—MARK vi. 2, 3.



Human nature was true to itself. The contemporaries of Christ had erected their own standard of rationality, and marked out the little way in which the angels of Wisdom and Prudence should walk; but the moment that Christ ignored their standard, and enlarged the orbit of human action, they deemed Him a fanatic, and hurled their scandal at His unallied name. The knowledge of a man's pedigree has not seldom marred his influence over the conceited. The *unknowns* have often been accounted the world's nobilities. On this point Christ has laid down a doctrine of universal application—"A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark vi. 4). Had Christ been the scion of a noble house, His contemporaries might have accorded a willing ear; instead of this, He was the offspring of industry, the child of obscurity, and they were "offended at Him." What right had an untutored carpenter to teach the doctrines of God, and call men to repentance? How could a man, toiling in a carpenter's shed at Nazareth, summon effrontery enough to say, I am the being of whom prophets spake; the burden of Isaiah's song; the light of ancient day? What business had a carpenter to unlock the grasp of death, and frown disease out of the leper's blood? True, His words were with power and much assurance; but He was only a *carpenter*: true, He aimed not at the king's

crown or the epicure's indulgence ; but He was only a *carpenter* : true, His life was unstained by an act of villany and unweakened by a deed of cowardice ; but He was only a *carpenter* : true, His rebukes cleft the heart to the core, and His commands pointed right heavenward ; but He was only a *carpenter* : and as the refined and conceited hordes remembered this most appalling fact, no wonder that they shuddered with disgust, and were "offended at Him" !

A man's contemporaries can hardly forgive him for ascending heights which they themselves cannot attain. So long as he will occupy the netherlands, they will drop him a tear of pity, and waive him a signal of sympathetic recognition ; but there are eyes which *cannot look up*, and hands that are good for nothing but *patronage*. Carpenters must not ask *an age* to become their auditor. They may speak to their own *kind* of dust, but not to those who walk on the highways of earth. And yet so eccentric is man, that he will tolerate a *dead* carpenter more than a *living* one ; that is to say, when the carpenter can no longer approach him in rough clothing, or hold out a horny hand, man will throw a withered laurel on the dead brow, and humph out an expression which word-naturalists might probably classify with the lowest order of *compliments*. The coffin seems to be a kind of standard of greatness ; for some men are spoken of

as "great" immediately their coffin lid is screwed, who were hardly known in the circles of fashion and elegance; or, if their names were breathed in these charmed circles, it was with a soft whisper, as though the speakers were afraid they should awake some angry deity, who would chide the baseness of their taste.

Let *us* be great enough to see greatness wherever it really exists. Our business should be less with the occupation of the speaker than with the truth of his speech; less with the pedigree of the logician than with the soundness of his reasoning. Truth is not always clad in purple. The rhythm of her speech may not harmonize with the dogmas of science, but it claims the same origin as the rhythm of the thunder or the cadences of the stormy sea. If truth should come to you on the wings of poesy, hail her with thankfulness; and if she flow through the rough channel of a carpenter's lips, be honest enough to shout a hearty welcome.

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"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard."—LUKE vii. 22.

Christ gave *facts* for answers. Deeds were His eulogists. When He saw the *blind* man groping his way, He opened the sightless eyeball, and the first image painted there was the Creator's own. When He met the *deaf* man, He opened a new

medium of communication to the brain; and the first message telegraphed to that organ was, "Peace on earth, and good will toward men." These were Christ's living answers to querists of all classes. Christianity is a structure of *facts*. Its temple is composed of *living* stones. Christianity does not point to the learned treatise as her palladium. She has grander resources than the speculations of metaphysics. Christianity points where Christ points, viz., to *lives*, to *facts*. Christ calls to Him the child of poverty, and breathes into his ear the messages of divine love; Christ leads the wandering angel of reason back to her rightful throne; Christ sympathizes with misery, and helps weakness; and, pointing to these displays of His love and power, bids the inquirer go and tell the things he has "seen and heard." Christ cared not to defend His Messiahship in mere words. He found His credentials in the realm of positive action. His argument is action,—His philosophy, one unbroken tissue of beneficence: His life, seamless as His own robe, is at once His grandest monument, His brightest crown, His sublimest epitaph.

Lessons are thickly clustering round the answer of Christ. When men would cross-examine our faith and hope, it would be well could we enclose them in the sanctuary of our daily life, and bid them accept as answers the things they "see and

hear." It is of poor avail that you summon a lexicon where you should exhibit a life, or take refuge in a grammar when conduct should be your rampart. It is true that when her enemies have defied her to fight on the ground of philosophy and criticism, Christianity has left them thrice slain on the very battle-field of their own choice ; yet her highest and noblest appeal is to her practical conquests in the human heart. She shows how she has changed the tiger to a lamb, and the vulture to a dove,—how she has destroyed the vengeance of the malicious, annihilated the rapacity of the extortioner, relaxed the grasp of the miser, and turned the flinty rock into springs of water,—and these are her eternal bulwarks ! Her glorious declaration is, " I will plant in the wilderness the cedar tree, the shittah tree, and the myrtle and the oil tree ; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine and the box tree together : that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

*Here is a lesson to those who are thrown into ungodly society.* Let your verbal defences be illustrated and dignified by blameless and noble life. Let your industry, faithfulness, generosity, and temper, be arguments on which the smell of criticism's hottest fire cannot pass. Preach the gospel by *being* it. *Live* your positions. Let your logic

be but as the veins and arteries through which the life-blood of consistency may flow : thus your enemies "shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

*Here is a lesson to christian churches.* You are surrounded by a population whose hearts are estranged from God. Ignorance nestles under the very eaves of your sanctuary : the black river of vice washes the foundations of your temple, and the foul waters occasionally overflow its very threshold : the adulterer, the murderer, the blasphemer, hold carnival within the sound of your psalmody ;—and now, assuming for a moment the position of John's disciples, I ask, "Are you they that should come, or look we for others?" In the name of God, I demand reply ! Do you furnish a lengthy list of orthodox beliefs ? Do you place in my hand ecclesiastical formulæ, catechisms, and bodies of divinity ? If these be the only pledges of your spiritual life, away with them ! Show me a *man* out of whose heart the devils of rebellion, pride, malice, deceit, have been expelled,—show me a home in which has been enkindled the lamp of heaven,—show me, on the steep of Calvary, the footprints of those whom you have led to the Saviour,—then with holy triumph you may bid me "go and tell the things I have seen and heard" !

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"Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand."

—MARK i. 41.

How much is explained by that simple declaration! "Compassion" is one of the key-words of the Saviour's history. Follow the Divine Man in His pilgrimages, and you will ever find His heart melting with compassion. Jesus was the embodiment of Pity. This text might have ante-dated the Saviour's incarnation. It would have been a fitting expression for angels in the solemn hour in which Jesus left His celestial throne,—how sweetly might they have joined in saying, "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand"! The mystery of the atonement is shrouded in those beautiful words: the counsels of eternity are therein epitomized! We may well sing,—"*Jesus, thou art all compassion.*" When He wept, He wept not for Himself. Over others' woes He groaned. The spear of steel could draw from Him only "water and blood," but the spear of human suffering opens the great deep of His unutterable compassion. Christ's was a *practical* pity;—He "*put forth His hand.*" And is not this *true* pity? Can genuine pity give her tears and forbear her hand? Never! Tear and hand are bound in eternal wedlock.

I have no word wherewith to represent the Saviour's compassionate sorrow. He was a "*man of sorrows*"! Images and symbols fail me,—metaphors beg release from the task of setting forth the

Saviour's pity and grief. I have heard David's wail, and Rachel's lamentation ; I have heard the lioness rend the forest when bereaved of her young ; I have seen the eagle's eye flash fire as it gazed on its plundered nest ; I have seen maternal love mute, deaf, petrified, as it beheld the lifeless form of a darling child ; I have seen a father's breast swell with ungovernable emotion as he heard the name of his prodigal boy ; I have watched the widow betake herself to the long-covered grave, and baptize the roots of the mournful yew tree with her tears ; but I have sought in vain for a parallel of the Saviour's sorrow, compassion, and pity, when He beheld earth a ruin and humanity a wreck !

Let no man falsely construe my meaning. Christ's *compassion* will not save men. Imagine not that simply *because* Christ wept you will be saved. Certain conditions are required in man ere he can appropriate the manifold blessings of the atonement ; these conditions cannot be better designated than by their scriptural names—*Repentance and Faith*. Men are in danger of deluding themselves with the idea that a *weeping Saviour* can never be a *punitive Judge*. They forget that Christ has a "day of wrath," as well as a day of pity. In one solemn word, therefore, I would proclaim that the eternity of the unrepentant sinner will be hung in sable sackcloth, and burn with fiercer fury because the Saviour wept !



"Bring him unto Me."—MARK ix. 19.

The circumstances under which this command was given are most extraordinary and exciting. A distracted parent had brought his son, possessed with a dumb spirit, to the disciples, that they might cure him. Their efforts were abortive. A great multitude had congregated round the disciples. Christ, on approaching, inquired the reason of the tumult, and was answered, "Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." This was a crisis in the history of miracles. I can imagine the half-triumphant feelings of the scribes and Pharisees as they witnessed the scene. Would Christ's successful career now be brought to a melancholy close? Had the Victor confronted an enemy of overwhelming strength? Would His proud banner be torn into rags by an exultant foe? We have but a moment in which to indulge such interrogatories, for the royal Saviour interrupts with, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto Me." Could words be more kingly? The man who talks thus must be conscious of irresistible power,—to use such words *before the cure*, was to

subject himself to the cries of indignant scorn and execration in the event of defeat. This was the moment on which untold results were suspended: the dumb spirit apparently defied the Healer, for when the sufferer was brought into the presence of Jesus, "the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." Look at the scene! In the sufferer you have a representation of a terrible chaos, and in Christ the Creator of light and order; Christ speaks but *once*,—"Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." That one "charge" was enough: the demon that defied innumerable physicians, that had scorned the incantations of soothsayers, and even laughed at the name of Christ, as that name was pronounced by faithless lips, could hold sovereignty no longer when the Majesty of all spirits bade him relinquish throne and sceptre. Thus did Christ conquer. He tore up the mountain of difficulty by the roots, and scattered it to the winds; over this mournful chaos he breathed the word which brings light and beauty, order and music.

Herein is symbolized the relations of Christ to the great world of guilt and woe. Whole generations of hireling priests have undertaken to nurse the world in its mortal sickness. Empirics have grown rich by the sale of innumerable nostrums. Legislators have wrapped the patient in a tenfold

bandage of parchment. Educationists have showered arithmetics, grammars, and scientific treatises around the bed of the sufferer; but the bulletins are still fraught with melancholy meaning. While the sick and dying world has been thus nearly choked with the draughts prescribed by contending doctors, the great Healer has said, "BRING THE WORLD UNTO ME;" and not until the world has been taken to Christ will its smitten heart be recovered of its deadly plague.

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"I will."—LUKE v. 13.

Christ was self-assertive. What would be insufferable egotism in men was the essential life of Christ. He said "I," because he could ascend no higher. The sea might refer to the river, the moon might refer to the sun, but Christ had taken the last step upward when He said, "I and My Father are one." When He ceased to speak of Himself He ceased to bless the world. He must be His own text and His own commentator. Had He turned from Himself He would have turned into outer darkness, for He was "*the light of the world.*" All the forces of the universe tremble in that "ego."

"I will." Know you the deep meaning of that expression? It is the grandest solution of all mysteries. It is written round every sea, and the stormiest billow cannot overleap it. It is the boundary of every star. The comet seeth it, and

thereby knoweth its appointed course. It is the limit of hell. It is the glory of heaven. It is the secret of life.

"I will." Tempests were hushed by it ; from the sound thereof devils fled in terror ; at its bidding fire gleamed in the dim eye of sickness, and the withered cheek glowed and bloomed. Omnipotent volition ! the universe is but its embodiment ; all fairest, loveliest, sublimest things are but itself set in richest jewellery !

"I will." Know ye not that the will of God is your salvation ? As the Lord liveth, He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would Christ have wept over Jerusalem when He knew that He had *willed* it to destruction ? Would He have breathed tenderest and fullest welcomes to men whom, in purpose, He had consigned to unquenchable fire ? Do such conclusions harmonize with the loving and beneficent life of Jesus ? Never ! never ! Christ wills the happiness of all men, and has determined the conditions on which that happiness can be realized. If man is not happy, the secret of his misery is not to be found in the *will* of his heavenly Father ; were it so, the Bible would be man's vilest deceiver, and the cross the most melancholy exhibition of heartless hypocrisy. Let sinners find their damnation where they please they will never find it in the "I WILL" of a wise, and loving, and atoning God.

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone."—MATT. xiv. 23.

So devout was Christ, that we may emphatically affirm that the Lord's *life* was the Lord's *prayer*. Jesus walked with the Father,—nay, He was *with* the Father, and might, therefore, truly say, "The Son of man, *which is in heaven*." Christ's nearness to God was oftentimes most awe-inspiring. You might almost *hear* the living messages as they fell from the lips of Jehovah into the ear of Jesus. A few of Christ's prayers adorn the sacred page—such prayers! What simplicity, yea what reverence, yea what earnestness, yea what trust, mark these intercessions! Devoutness is essential to a great life. Men may be physically great without being devout, but beyond such greatness they cannot rise without implicit, intelligent, reverential faith. Devoutness connects man directly with the Infinite. Devoutness takes men to that mountain whence they may obtain a clear view of "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Devoutness is not synonymous with sentimentalism. Devoutness is as superior to cant as is the natural to the artificial flower. Devoutness is often too profound for language; its solemnity strikes it dumb. The shallow stream can babble without interruption, but the deep river often runs without faintest speech.

Christ *alone* on the mountain. He has turned His back on the tumultuous throngs, and now He seeks the refreshment of solitude. The good man is least alone when most alone. The city to him is but "the mount which might be touched;" solitude is the true Zion: the human multitude he would gladly exchange for the "innumerable company of angels;" and flesh and blood he would cheerfully forego, for communion with the "spirits of the just made perfect." When the good man has "sent away", the visible and sensuous, the invisible and spiritual draw closely and warmly to his heart. The man who dreads solitude knows not the charms of the highest life,—has not, in fact, developed the resources of his own being. Loneliness throws man upon himself and upon God. Loneliness teacheth man to "endure, as seeing Him who is invisible." He who cannot live but in company is the most helpless, the most dependent, the most joyless of beings. Dissipation is mistaken for pleasure, and excitement cheats the soul of true inspiration. Solitude aids the habit of self-introversion. Vulgarity looks *out*, true refinement looks *within*. The subjective nature of the good man is the sovereign of the objective. Let me urge young men to love retirement; they will learn lessons in the temple of solitude, the palace of the Silences, which are not written on the broad sheet of daily public life.

Christ was alone *praying*. Why did *Christ* pray? All power was His servant, wisdom was throned in His intellect, all secrets were unveiled to His eye; why, then, did He pray? An expression of His *will* made the universe obedient as a loving child, then why did He pray? Without entering into the dread mystery of His divine-human life, we may safely affirm that *He prayed as an example to the church*. When He rose from the altar He might have said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, pray; so ought ye also to pray." Prayer insures safety. You may pray without words: prayer may be in the glance of the eye, in the heaving of the troubled breast. One sigh may be more devotional than the most elaborate liturgy. We err in imagining that prayer is to be measured by syllables. My shortest prayers have often brought me nearer heaven than those which contained many words. If you can really spend hours in true prayer, gladly consecrate the time to that purpose; but be not deterred from the heavenly throne because your words are few, and simple, and broken.

Solitude and prayer are sources of power.

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"He humbled Himself."—PHIL. ii. 8.

The humiliation of Christ revealed the riches of His nature. This may startle by its boldness, but

it is true nevertheless. There is a sense in which even *darkness* is a revealer. There are objects which cannot be seen by the naked eye in the blaze of the sun. Let me illustrate the meaning of the assertion that THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST REVEALED THE RICHES OF HIS NATURE. Hasten down to Eden on the day of Adam's entrance on that enchanting scene, and tell me what were Adam's feelings at the *first sunset*. Using the language of popular astronomy, the sun sought the western horizon; shadows were cast over the paths of Eden, and the broad rivers darkled rapidly as the hours fled: what apprehensions agitated the bosom of Adam? What was that great flaming orb which had kept him company during the day? Was it a fire-eyed visitor, who had come from heavenly regions to gaze on the last triumph of creative power? Was it an offended spectator, who hurried from a scene on which he could no longer look with complacent smile? Such questions might excite wonder, and turn the soul inquiringly on the all-knowing Creator. The shadows deepen, but lo!—

“Hesperus with the host of heaven came.”

The *one* eye closed, and behold! myriads of bright eyes glittered in the firmament. The calm, trembling, pulsing stars were only waiting until the royal orb languished on his “couch of gold,”



and then hung out their lamps, as if to light him to the tomb. Carry this illustration into the moral world. Christ for countless ages had shone as the Sun of heaven; angels rejoiced in His light and reflected His splendour; in process of time that heavenly Sun must *set*, Christ must be born of a woman: behold the staggering angels, as they gaze on a departing Christ; they desire to look into the mystery, but divine wisdom forbids; would the universe be shrouded in darkness? might their golden harps remain mute for ever? was God about to close the history of all existences? They knew not; but while lost in wonder, see, there flashes forth the star of Bethlehem; and 'tis but a herald star, for countless others glitter round it, and we behold in the *night of humiliation* what we saw not in the dazzling splendour of regal day.

Is the *tenderest pity* a star? It shone on the night of humiliation. Is the *deepest condescension* a star? It shone on the night of humiliation. Is the *sweetest gentleness* a star? It shone on the night of humiliation. Is the *purest sanctity* a star? It shone on the night of humiliation. In seeing Christ's humiliation we saw His *wealth*. Having seen a pity which never failed, a condescension which scorned not the lowest depths of misery, a gentleness tenderer than maternal love, a sanctity unparalleled and incorruptible, we have a clearer

and fuller comprehension of that mysterious expression, "THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST."

The humiliation of Christ was a display of His *transcendent power*. True humiliation cannot take place without true power; Christ, therefore, gave as striking a proof of His omnipotence in His self-humiliation as though He had adorned His head with a diadem of suns. I wish it to be *felt* that all the steps of His humiliation were taken by Himself. See how the process stands:—

{	"made <i>Himself</i> of no reputation."
	"took upon <i>Him</i> the form of a servant."
	"He humbled <i>Himself</i> ."
	"He became obedient unto death."

In all this CHRIST HIMSELF WAS THE ONLY AGENT ! The *sun* has no power to quench his own beams. The *river* cannot reverse its course. *Man* has no alternative but to obey the voice of death. How gloriously does the humiliation of Christ contrast with this powerlessness ! Behold the sublimity of the attitude which Christ assumes in relation to death,—*He became obedient to it !* He was death's King. Death could never wield its fatal sword apart from His permission, yet now he unbare His bosom and bids the monster strike. For long ages death has stood by His throne and obeyed His will, but in this hour the King himself lays aside His robes of majesty, and orders the sword of death to be plunged into His heart.

Was ever love like this? Can we wonder that when men are fully impressed with the pureness, the grandeur, the freeness of this love, they sing,—

“Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all”?

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“Christ both died, and rose.”—Rom. xiv. 9.

Amid the melancholy gloom of Calvary, Joseph and Nicodemus revealed themselves as the disciples of Jesus. Till this hour they had remained publicly undeclared; but that which they confessed not openly in the days of the living Christ, they pledged over the altar of His mangled corpse. Thus, while the men who would have called fire from heaven to consume the adversaries of Christ forsook the standard, two comparative strangers, distinguished for opulence and learning, claimed the body of their tortured Lord.

I regard the death and resurrection of Christ as striking symbols of the course and triumph of the truth. Let us dwell on the first point,—

I. THE DEATH OF CHRIST SYMBOLIZES THE TERRIBLE CONFLICTS IN WHICH THE TRUTH HAS OFTEN BEEN ENGAGED.

The history of truth, like the history of Christ, might be largely written in tears and blood. The enemy has never relinquished a position without endeavouring to pierce the heart of his celestial

assailant. The truth has had to climb the heaving sides of the volcano, and cross the boiling breast of the foaming deep. She has had to sound the trumpet which announced her own presence; she has entered regions in which no friendly voice hailed her as a welcome visitant; she has had to pursue her way through the fiery furnace of incipient perdition; and her dreary course has often lain in desolate cemeteries, in which the fairest graces and virtues lay entombed, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

There are two particulars in the history of Christ which impressively characterize the fate of truth,—

First. *It has been promoted to a fictitious royalty.* They clothed the Saviour in a "purple robe, and put a sceptre in His hand, and bowed the knee, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!" So with the truth: some have arrayed it in the purple robe of *mere profession*; some have placed in its hand the sceptre of *financial support*; and others have rendered it a *hypocritical homage*. Looking from the distance, you would have imagined that the Jews had actually received the doctrine of Christ's kingship, and appointed a coronation day: and so, looking at a *distance* on men's conduct in relation to truth, you would occasionally almost believe that they confessed its sovereignty, and would hence-on bow loyally to its sternest requirements. We are deluded. It is but a temporary and fictitious

royalty to which the truth is promoted. Its enemies design its deepest humiliation ; distance has deceived us,—the truth is doomed to the cross.

Second. *It has been abandoned when allegiance became perilous.* "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." In the history of almost every truth this short sentence forms a part. When truth is popular, the basest coward will sing its praises ; but let it never be forgotten that cowardice ever seeks the crowd ; all cowards are gregarious, they dare not appear alone. So long as some men can make capital by their allegiance to the truth, you may rely on their adherence. They would sell their mother's blood for money ; they would mortgage the throne of God for money ; they would risk their eternal damnation for gold ! As the storm tries the vessel, so the storm tries the professors of truth. The vessel may present a noble figure on the calm waters, but when those waters leap upon her in their tempestuous wrath, the soundness of her timbers will be tested. So with men in relation to divine truth : they are valorous when there is no opposing army, heroes while the enemy sleeps ; but in the day of the foe you will find who are the true soldiers, and who are heartless recreants.

Take the next point :—

II. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST SYMBOLIZES  
THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH.

As surely as Christ rose will every smitten truth rise. The rolling stone, the rending sepulchre, the staggered guard, the shining angels, the comforted women, are all eloquent of the truth's triumphant future. We shall, however, more perfectly appreciate the victory by taking note of some of the difficulties which have been overcome:—

First. *Every interruptive expedient has been adopted.* In the case of Christ's burial we have a great stone, an armed guard, an official seal. Everything that a determined and vigilant ingenuity could devise was adopted to insure the defeat of the new faith. The counterpart of these precautions may be found in the history of all truth. Such a mode of procedure suggests two great facts in man's moral nature:—

(a) *Man's latent belief in the great truths of Christianity.* Those men had a secret conviction that Christ *might* rise again. Had their disbelief in His divine power been unmingled by a doubt, they would have defied all the stratagems of the cowardly men who had deserted Him in the midnight of His troubles.

(b) *Man's awful dread of awakening a slumbering conscience.* He rolls a great stone to the tomb door, surrounds it with an armed guard, and keeps intruders at the greatest possible distance. Every footfall strikes terror into his heart. The hymn of the morning songster is to him a burdensome grief

lest it should awake the angry sleeper. But as in the case of conscience, so in the case of truth, every effort is vain : the sentinels of darkness are smitten to the earth, and the revived Power scorns every foe !

Second. *Homage has been developed where least expected.* Joseph and Nicodemus were type-men ;— they were part of God's reserve host. Elijah imagined himself the only faithful representative of truth, but He who knoweth every soldier in His army assured the desponding prophet that there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal ! As the Israelites drank water from the rock in the wilderness, so has the truth in her desert travels found water where she least expected a spring,—so careful hath God been of the highest interests of man's complex nature.

Third. *Enemies have been driven to the adoption of most miserable subterfuges.* There was strange confusion among the enemies of Christ when the vacant sepulchre was discovered, and in the hour of bewilderment excuses and explanations were rife. Bribery, false accusation of the disciples, and lies to the governor, followed in rapid succession. It was found that no sin is self-terminating,—bribery necessitated cognate sins. It was furthermore found then, as it may be found now, that there are men ever ready, at the bidding of self-interest, to become the tools of a party. Of the soldiers it is signifi-

cantly recorded, "*So they took the money, and did as they were taught.*" There are many histories condensed into that short expression. Money secures much obedience. Satan has made good use of gold,—good, in his own sense of the term. Dishonesty has its price, but faithfulness who can buy? Truth cannot be bribed into silence;—its sacred watchword is, "I cannot but speak the things which I have seen and heard."

Come, then, "see the place where the Lord lay." In seeing *that*, you may learn how bitter and awful may be the temporary lot of truth,—how futile are all expedients to prevent its progress,—how self-resurrectional is its triumphant and eternal power.

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"The Lord is risen indeed."—LUKE xxiv. 34.

The posthumous appearances of Christ indicate an ample field of speculation. *Why* did Christ re-appear to His disciples? Was the resurrection necessary to the completion of the atonement? Would not the way to God have been as effectually opened had Jesus Christ passed into heaven as His saints are allowed to pass? These inquiries would lead us into boundless realms of thought. We have a special purpose in view, however, and care not to enlarge upon these problems farther than to suggest that Christ's posthumous appearance would (1) disprove the prognostications of His enemies; (2) clothe



His offers of *life* with overwhelming power; (3) display His sovereignty over the laws of being; and (4) illustrate the depths of His interest in human salvation. The purpose of which I am in pursuit is to answer the inquiry, *In what spirit did Jesus return from the dead?* He might have risen *retributively*,—His eyes might have flashed lightning on His murderers. He might have risen *scornfully*, saying to His tormentors, you *see* that I am divine—you would like to fraternize with Me *now* that My omnipotence has been proved; but I repel you, I laugh you to scorn, and I leave the earth to rot. In no such spirit, however, did Jesus return from the dead. Let us hear His own statement. “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth”—what then? Launch the bolts of destruction? Smite My destroyers? Avenge Me of Mine enemies? No! hear the loving command, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations!*” You see, hence, that Christ rose in a spirit of *universal benevolence*. He compassionated the nations, and created an instrument by which they might hear the saving truths of the gospel. A great life-principle is here suggested, viz., THE SPIRIT WHICH WAS FOUND IN CHRIST AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD WILL BE FOUND IN EVERY MAN AFTER A MORAL RESURRECTION. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” When men are quickened from death in trespasses and sins, they look upon the nations

in a new aspect. Aforetime they looked upon the world commercially, politically, or geographically: they regarded the earth as a gigantic cornfield, an immeasurable mine, or a vast cotton plantation; but now that the love of Christ burns in their hearts, they exclaim, "*The fields are white unto the harvest!*" Brethren, are you smitten with compassion as you reflect on the moral condition of the countless heathen? Remember that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His."

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"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection"—PHIL. iii. 10.

Every soul has a supreme desire. "*That I may*" is the watchword of all ambition. One of the mightiest spirits with which creative energy ever blessed the world expressed its loftiest desire in those pure and noble words—"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." There is remarkable fulness in this word "*know*." The Apostle desires not a mere acquaintance with Christ as an historical personage; he would imbibe His spirit, assimilate into His nature, understand the secret springs of His unparalleled benevolence, and produce His brilliant life. Who knows a country best—the man who has passed through it with all the rapidity of modern locomotion, or the man who has spent years amid its hills and dales, its woods

and rivers? Whose verdict on an individual character is most trustworthy—his who has had but a superficial acquaintance with the individual in question, or his who has seen that individual in all the mutations of poverty and wealth, grief and joy, disappointment and realization? Those inquiries admit of but one reply. So in relation to Christ: he who "*knows*" Christ can best explain His words, trust His promises, reveal His nature. In proportion as you "*know*" Christ, can you understand His most mysterious and His most awful utterances. How many mistakes, for example, have been made by those who "*know*" not the Saviour, as to the *woes* which escaped His lips! The unsympathetic and ignorant have been smitten with amazement as they have heard thunders of objugation uttered by the meek and lowly Jesus. Not *knowing* Christ, they failed to comprehend how gentleness could frown, and love's benignant eye flash with retributive fire. They have ascribed these woes to *passion*,—they have transfigured the Saviour into an avenging fury! Those, however, who "*know*" Christ, can trace even His anathemas to the fountain of His holiness,—His severest rebukes to His incorruptible and eternal love. A stranger, watching the countenance or actions of your chosen friend, may misinterpret expressions or deeds,—may classify his manifestations under false categories,—may see irreverence in his playfulness, harshness in his fidelity,

excess in his generosity : but *you*, "knowing" the heart thus severely criticized, can see veneration in its lightness, and from its every string can evoke the music of an unsuspecting and self-oblivious love !—The illustration may be applied to the Saviour. He is the best interpreter of Christ who "*knows*" Christ best. The child, not the alien, can best expound the father's utterances. Sympathy is the true exponent. The man who is out of sympathy with Christ will never excel as a commentator on the New Testament. Sympathy can remove difficulties before which a heartless criticism can only tremble. Be it our daily prayer, then, that we "*may know*" Christ,—become part of Him, become familiar with His infinite purity, His boundless love, His unutterable mercy !

"And the power of His resurrection." We are to "*know*" this "power,"—having experienced it in our moral nature we shall best know it. You can never truly know a resurrection by pictures and theories ; you must have heard the trumpet which alone can awake the dead,—you must be able to say, "Come, see the place where my nature lay," ere you can know the "power" of Christ's "resurrection." Moral resurrection is attested by infallible signs. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Moral *crucifixion* must precede moral resurrection. By the cross of Christ

the "world is crucified unto us and we unto the world." When the wondering and bewildered disciples doubted as to Christ's identity, "*He showed them His hands and His feet.*" When persons question your Christianity, can you show them the print of the nails in your hands,—can you show the blood-marks on your feet? Can you say to every Didymus, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side"? This is the appeal which can stagger an incredulous world! Ours need be no war of *words*. He who carries the nail-print carries the best volume of evidence. The *pierced* hand can smite the stoutest foe. Let us prove that our passions have been mortified, that the old serpent has been "bruised," that the carnal nature has suffered death,—then shall we "know Christ, and the power of His resurrection."

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"Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray."—**MATT.** xix. 13.

Few scenes in the life of Christ combine so many elements of interest as that in which little children were brought for His benediction. Jesus had been healing the sick and answering the captious inquiries of the Sadducees, when anxious mothers brought their infants to the place where Christ abode. Having been blessed themselves, they were solicitous on their children's behalf. Not doubting the Master's

readiness to smile on the little ones, they paused not to ask the leave of those by whom He was surrounded. The disciples, probably anxious that their Lord should have rest, forbade the approaching mothers; but Jesus, hearing the rebuke of His followers, commanded that the children should be introduced to His presence. True greatness can accommodate itself to the minute as well as to the vast. The atmosphere not only vitalizes the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan, but droppeth a blessing into the cup of the fragile flower. Jesus Christ was the impersonation of the loftiest greatness; hence we find Him not only engaged in refuting the sophistries of Sadduceeism, or quieting tumultuous seas, or awaking the dead, but also in crowning the head of infancy with the diadem of His blessing.

This scene brings Christ before us in three most impressive aspects:—

I. AS THE CENTRE OF A CONSCIOUSLY NECESSITOUS WORLD.

The blind, the deaf, the leper, the demon-bound, had been given to understand that Jesus had sovereign control over their several maladies, and would deliver them from pain and thralldom. Hence on every road might be found multitudes whose eager inquiry was for Jesus of Nazareth. The blind man felt that his sightless eye-balls formed the best apology for his intrusion on the Son of God; and

the leper, that he could carry no weightier letter of introduction to the Great Healer than his poor emaciated frame. Those sufferers felt their *need* of Jesus. Christ was the one *Light* in a desert of intensest darkness, and men enkindled their torches at His flame : He was the *Bread*, and multitudes of men dying of hunger begged that they might eat and live : He was the fountain of *consolation*, and all diseased and broken hearts panted for the refreshing stream. The doubter came with his perplexities : the sophist with his questions : the traveller with his burden : all men for the purposes which severally controlled their hearts. Men ran toward Christ as though they might lose a transient opportunity ; hence the hours of His life were crowded with deeds of love.

II. AS SURROUNDED BY MEN WHO DID NOT COMPREHEND THE UNIVERSALITY OF HIS MISSION.

The disciples had but an imperfect conception of the mission of Christ. They grasped not the benevolence of His heart. Their conduct in this case shows,—

First. *That men have mistaken notions regarding the dignity of Christ.* Christ's dignity was never offended but by sin. He was never ashamed of the companionship of poverty and toil. To be seen blessing a child was not a degradation. I would to God that all who have assumed Christ's name entertained the same notions of dignity as did their Master.

There would not be one forsaken duty. We should have no mendicant offices in the church. The servant is often more haughty than his lord. True christian dignity consists in veneration without cant, in freedom without licentiousness, in joy without levity, in condescension without serfdom. Learn dignity of Christ. In Him we shall see how to stoop without servility, to suffer without cowardice, to conquer without vaunting.

Second. *That men have presumed to define the classes that shall approach Christ.* The disciples would not admit *children* to the Lord's presence, and they are but types of a multifarious class. In our own age there are men audacious enough to cry, "*Thou shalt not.*" Priests have announced themselves as gates to heaven. An infamous anti-nomianism has analyzed and classified the race into "saved" and "damned." There are men who would deter the guilty and shattered prodigal from returning to his Father's house, and arrest others who are flying straight to the Tree of Life on which the Saviour bleeds, that they may perplex and entangle them in subtle, mysterious, infinite questionings which the corrupt soul can never solve. I proclaim the wickedness of every man who would forbid the sinner's approach to Christ. The benevolent Saviour has employed no human keepers of the gates of salvation. The pompous and fastidious sentinels who watch there are self-placed; they have no



divine credentials ; pass them, therefore, O Christ-seeker, and defy their malignant but puny power.

Third. *That even well-meaning men may be obstacles in the path of Christianity.* I cannot question the *motive* of the disciples in forbidding the approach of the children ; I believe that their veto may be satisfactorily accounted for : the principle, however, remains the same, that well-intentioned people may be stumbling-blocks. We find illustrations among those who would forbid the opening of the sanctuary on any but the regularly appointed occasions—those who would hold the prayer meeting in a back building, lest the church pews should be injured by some undevout alien who might find his way to the place of public concourse. Well-meaning but short-sighted people are continually mistaking the great purposes of divine love, and thereby incurring the Master's rebuke. Their dwarf souls cannot comprehend the sublimities of the Eternal ; they imagine that the Infinite is to be measured by their little standard, and hence their lives are a series of well-intentioned blunders and devout misapprehensions.

### III. AS ASSERTING THE SOVEREIGNTY AND FULLNESS OF HIS GRACE.

"But Jesus said, . . . forbid them not." Two voices were heard on this question ; the voice of the servant and the voice of the Lord. As is a man's soul so is his voice. The half-grown

soul speaks in negatives, is fond of a "little brief authority," and omits no opportunity of flourishing its official baton. The voice of a true sovereign is a positive welcome: it cannot "forbid" the forth-putting of the feeblest power in the right direction; such a voice hath ever a cheerful word for the blind man groping his way, or the leper stealthily hastening to the feet of Jesus. Christ nullified the veto of the disciples, so can He set aside the edicts of councils, and reverse the verdict of all lower courts. Let each sinner continue his pursuit of Christ until Christ himself cries, "Approach Me not."

Many useful words might be added, but our purpose permits only a reference to the doctrine of infant salvation. Concerning infants, we have the assurance that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." To those who have relinquished their loved ones at the imperious bidding of death, those words must be instinct with a true music. How gladly doth the heart-door open to admit such a message! *Your infant is in heaven.* The young spirit—winged, holy, and beautiful—sits by the "pure river," or rests amid the branches of the life-tree. It is there, may I hope? *as an instalment of yourself.* Are you not determined to follow that prized one? Doth not its glorification invest heaven with increased attractiveness? Is not the crystal river more inviting because it re-

flects the image of your child? Up and on, poor heart-wrung parents; by the blood of the everlasting covenant, you and the sainted treasure may know the joys of eternal re-union.

I must softly breathe one word into the chamber in which a distracted mother is fighting with death for the life of her babe. Yours is, indeed, a sore conflict. Your soul quakes as the feeble light flickers in the dying eye. Love trembles on the verge of madness. But why? You are intercepting your child's passage to the King's presence! You are standing between the child and the light of eternal glory! You are smiting the hand of the child's emancipator! Jesus Christ has commissioned the angel of death to visit your garden, and pluck the flower to which you lovingly cling. Let it go; it is for transplantation, not destruction; and though the voice is to you harsh and pitiless, it is only death's rough way of delivering the King's message, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me."

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"Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"—JOHN xi. 7, 8.

"The Jews sought to stone me" would be, for certain natures, a sufficient reason for not again

venturing into their presence. Christ teaches us one divine lesson by this act of fortitude, viz., *to go wherever there is work to be done*. In Judea there was a sleeper who could be awakened by His power alone; hence He returned to Judea, in spite of the malignity which He had recently endured. Christ was called, by the sympathy of His own heart, to remove the sorrow which threatened to engulf two bereaved sisters, and to prove His divinity by a miraculous exertion of His power. He knew that in Judea there were multitudes ready to put Him to death; yet His own convictions overbalanced the fury of His enemies, and brought Him to the graveside of His beloved Lazarus.

Christianity develops true fortitude. There is a bravery which results from animal passion, there is a courage which arises from ambition, pride, love of applause; but these must be distinguished from christian heroism. The valour of a Christian is the result of regnant conviction: he is heroic because he is *right*; he fights to prove his loyalty to divine principles. Can your faith bear stoning? Dare you venture into Judea when every hand is ready to smite you? These are test-questions. It is but a lean, shivering, pitiable faith that dreads any form of reproach or chastisement.

Clamour is not necessary to the exhibition of true fortitude. Some men cannot fight without acquainting the public with their battles. Christ

was often dumb in His sufferings; He had not always the relief which speech or groan often insures, "He opened not His mouth." His was true *endurance*; His deepest sufferings secretly exhausted themselves. Christ endured many stonings of which history is ignorant. The severest trials of fortitude are not necessarily visible: the deadliest blows are aimed in the sacred hours when eye and pen are excluded.

The church that fears stoning is useless for practical purposes; it may be ornamental, but its beauty is perishable. It will make no vital impression on a neighbourhood; it is a delicate hot-house plant, that cannot bear the climate of an unsympathetic and ruthless world. Christ *in* a church will lift that church above the fear of stoning; for Christ transforms the churches into His own nature. We shall be surrounded by weaklings and cowards, until the fellowship of professors be entirely impregnated by the spirit of Him who never quaked in the presence of danger, or blushed in the enunciation of the principles on which His life was founded.

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"Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him."—JOHN xix. 4.

Probably there is not, in the whole compass of history, a more vivid illustration of hesitancy and

instability than that afforded by the conduct of Pilate immediately prior to the crucifixion. In the outset, Pilate was reluctant to undertake the judgment of the case; hence he said to the Jews, "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." Being compelled to ascend the judgment-seat, he held a private interview with Jesus, and then uttered the memorable declaration, "I find in Him no fault at all," John xviii. 38. Again did the implacable Jews treat the Saviour with the most studied indignity, crowning Him with thorns, and putting on Him a purple robe, exclaiming, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and smiting Him with their hands. Pilate again protested, saying, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." Hardly had the utterance fallen, till the rabble thundered out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" The hesitant judge interposed, saying, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him,"—the savage reply was instantaneous, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made himself the Son of God." This was as an arrow shot into the heart of Pilate, for "when Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid:" again did he confer with Jesus, and again was he impressed with the Saviour's innocence; for, according to John, "from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him." Vainly, however, did he plead;

the omnipotent appeal now rang from the maddened mob, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." 'Twas enough ; Pilate could stand no longer : "Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away."

Such are the circumstances. Pilate was destitute of strong conviction, and was consequently weak in the presence of a determined opposition. Pilate had not learned the majesty of that most majestic word—OUGHT ! That word is as a consuming fire, devouring all pleas and subterfuges : it is the watchword of the absolute in truth, purity, and freedom ; it is the embodiment of God ; it is the summary of the universe ; it is the sentinel of heaven ; it is the summary and memorial of Sinai ; it is the immutable standard to which all loyal spirits will eternally aspire. Men are nothing if devoid of intelligent and all-daring convictions.

Such convictions will infallibly insure three results :—

First. *Such convictions will deliver men from the despotism of popular fury.* Is any position more unenviable than that of a Pilate between two great billows of passion ? See an undecided official in church or senate called upon to determine a disputed question ! He is the butt of every witting : he would vote on both sides : if his opinions venture

the slightest disclosure, he trembles when the storm utters its voice: he is as helpless as the *débris* on the impetuous river, or the dust scattered by the whirlwind. A man of strong conviction in such a position would abide in perfect calm until the storm cried itself to sleep; then would he ascend the throne, and show that Right has patience to wait and power to conquer.

Second. *Such convictions enable men to sacrifice the highest human patronage.* To be "Cæsar's friend" is an object in whose attainment the sublimest principles are often trodden in the dust. There are men who can see no higher than Cæsar. Their feeble vision is so dazzled by the light of earthly pomp that they cannot see the "glory which excelleth." The true-born son of thought and feeling looks through the mock-splendour of earthly jets to the palace where reigns the King Eternal, whose garment is light, and whose throne is built of the riches of the universe; and beholding the Majesty of Heaven, he scorns the patronage of any Cæsar for which he must pay his blood or mortgage his eternity!

Third. *Such convictions enable men to serve the truth in the most perilous circumstances.* "Perfect love" of principle will "cast out fear" of personal injury. He is the truly royal man who, in divine strength, "plants his footsteps on the sea, and rides upon the storm." Ornamental men may be ap-



plauded in seasons of calm, but they are useless when fire-bolts are flying, and foundations shaking, and thunders rolling;—*then* we require men who can front frowning senates, and abash them with the regal decree, “WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN”!

Let us be *strong*,—“strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Being found mighty in faith, “rooted and grounded in love,” invincible in argument, and unimpeachable in life, we shall be the faithful servants of all the principles which can inspire and ennoble the race. We shall be firm as the eternal granite, and gentle as the harmless dove. When the enemy demands our crucifixion of the truth, instead of being Pilate-like, we shall reply by a louder utterance of its praise, and a profounder reverence at its throne!

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The Apostle seems to have taken special delight in rebuking all garrulous and self-sufficient pomposity. He delighted in throwing down the Babel-towers of frenzied ambition. His power of sarcasm, often held in strong check, however, is always great; but when he has to deal with the ever-wagging tongue of ignorance, his method is terrible. Sometimes its very childlike simplicity is its most fearful feature. Take a case:—

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

Was ever a crazy ambition, or a pompous self-inflation, so *quietly* put down? O the power of that quiet scorn! There is no fury, no tumult, no hissing denunciation, but a *whisper* that chills the very heart of vanity.

Sometimes he adopts a graver tone:—

“I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Then he passes into a shriller tone; his voice sweeps through the church like a brisk, whistling wind:—

“If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

Such talk would cause a terrible ruffling and shuffling in our pews. For a man to be told that his prized and petted “something” is in reality “nothing,” is a piercing test of his magnanimity.

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I am afraid that many of us are defective in moral symmetry. Some men are great Christians upon one point, and some are great Christians upon another. One man is a great Christian in the matter of sabbath school teaching, and another a stupendous Christian in the matter of total abstinence from all strong drink. We may be too much in the habit of singling out special virtues, to feed them up to a

high pitch, in order to carry off the prize at the ecclesiastical show. This would give but a poor idea of the roundness, the completeness, and the inclusiveness of the christian life. Suppose that next summer should grow little but sunflowers, and the following mainly abound in roses, and the third be chiefly distinguished for violets; however rich might be the produce of each, the summer, as a whole, would be accounted poor and ill-clad. Summer develops all the growing power of the soil, and so moral summer does not bring forth an *isolated* excellency, but clothes the human tree with "*all manner of fruit.*"

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Some men have a wonderful genius for making a gospel to suit their own particular line of conduct. When they feel disinclined to attend the week-evening service, they write a life of Christ, from which they conclusively prove that the Christian's main business is at home, in the bosom of his own family; and when they do go to such a service, and their hearts are made to glow with love for God's house, they write another life of Christ, by which they logically demonstrate that all the absentees have been incurring the most awful guilt. This is not the gospel according to one of the four evangelists; it is the gospel according to the weathercock.

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*Christ* "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," but His *churches* have exorbitantly demanded that each minister shall actually represent the whole of these officers in his own person. The minister is salaried to excel in each department. He is to be clear eyed as an apostle, full hearted as a pastor, swift footed as an evangelist, ready tongued as a teacher ; to all this he is to add as many excellencies as would make half a dozen respectable reputations. And all this ecclesiastical furniture, china, plate, and glass is to be hired out at the dazzling rate of £150 per annum. Yet, in the face of all this, the church is said not to be "wise in her generation." If making a sharp bargain, if cutting down a minister's board and lodging to a minimum, if keeping the pieties, the graces, the virtues, and the excellencies on dry bread and hard pillows are elements of wisdom, then the church is about the wisest, sharpest, and shrewdest buyer that tramps through the world's exchanges.

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Almighty God has to tolerate more puerility in His service than any monarch on earth. If Christianity had not been divine, it would have been ruined by many of its own preachers long ere now. The wonder is, not that it has escaped the cruel hand of the infidel (it can double up a whol

army of crazy atheists), but that it has survived the cruel kindness of its shallow expositors. Such expositors would have killed any *heresy*, and the only reason why they have not killed Christianity is that Christianity is of God.

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You call Methuselah an old man; and so he truly was if you reckon life by clockbeats. He saw more sunsets than any mortal upon the earth. Yet you may find many a youth who has not seen twenty Junes, who is older than Methuselah. Men live fast now. Thousands of youths have traversed half the world, seen its grandeurs of landscape, swept through its temples of art, thrilled to its harps of genius, ere yet the summer of their manhood has glowed upon them. A thousand years are becoming as one day, so rapidly do men now consume themselves. Age is not to be measured by the wrinkles on the brow, but by the furrows on the heart.

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Does the Bible contradict itself when it says, "Thy loving-kindnesses have been *ever of old*," and that "they are *new every morning*"? Beautiful is the conjunction of old and new. *Time* is old, but *morning* is young: *light* is ancient as eternity, but *sunrise* is new every day: *duration* goes on for ever, but the sunniest *June* never lived longer than a month.

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“And they feared as they entered into the cloud.”—

LUKE ix. 34.

Man is harassed by groundless fears. Who has ever looked for blessings in a cloud? Were we appointed to collect the riches of the universe, how many would pass by the clouds, as though in their dark and troubled breasts no treasure could be found! How often have we trembled as we have entered into the cloud of bereavement, or sorrowful apprehension; and yet in such a cloud have we heard a voice, as did the trembling disciples! In the cloud which they dreaded they heard the divine voice; henceforward, then, let us gratefully remember that even a cloud can contain a blessing, and that sometimes fear is but the quaking harbinger of joy.

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“There was no room for them in the inn.”—LUKE ii. 7.

A fit prelude to a life of poverty, humiliation, and sacrifice. By a vision of the night, when “deep sleep falleth upon man,” God could have prepared the keeper of the inn for the reception of the world’s Saviour: by a message conveyed by angelic lips He could have commanded the most sumptuous welcome which earth’s palaces could afford: He who created the beauties which smiled on the bosom of Paradise, could have called into existence a garden blooming with flowers

which never graced primeval Eden, and amid its blushing charms the "Rose of Sharon" might have budded. But no. In God's estimation, what difference is there between a palace and a manger? Whatever Christ touched He dignified. The *king* untouched by Christ is "blind, and miserable, and naked;" the *pauper* in whose breast Christ abides is gifted with loftiest dignity. Christ shed a glory round that eastern stable. Had infant *Cæsars* pillowed their heads in the manger it would have been a manger *still*; but *Christ* having found a cradle there, the manger is henceforth distinguished by such a glory as never shone on the palaces of kings.

## TELEGRAMS.

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1. "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee," Matt. iv. 6. "Angels came and ministered unto Him," Matt. iv. 11. The juxtaposition of these passages discovers a point of singular beauty and importance in the temptation of Jesus. In the first instance, the tempter perverts and misapplies a quotation from the Psalms ; he tempts Jesus to precipitate Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and supports his plea by the assurance that God would send His angels to save Him from ruin. The point to be noted here is that no angel band appeared and confirmed the declaration ; no radiant host sprang from the invisible into the visible, and, spreading their broad pinions of light, said, "Yea, fall on us, and confound the tempter by this display of faith in God." No. Not a wing rustled, not a breath stirred the wondering air, not a voice broke the muteness of astonished nature. Keep this first fact in view, then, and connect it with another. When the tempter had exhausted His quiver, and turned away foiled, and scornful of a power mightier than his own, *then* "angels came and ministered unto" the Son of God. Is there no meaning in



this? When the devil tempted the angels to come forth and save the Messiah, not an angel responded to the alien's voice—"The voice of strangers they will not follow:" when that voice was heard, all was quiet, as though angels had fled to a distant clime; but as soon as those blessed spirits were *really needed* to sustain the exhausted though victorious Lord, they hastened with fruit from the central tree of the inviolate Paradise, and "ministered unto Him." The practical lesson is obvious; there is a time when angels *will* come, and also a time when they will *not* come. They never come to save presumption from its merited fate, but ever speed to protect faith, and guide "the heirs of salvation" through the starry way into the ineffable glory.

2. Beautiful was Elisha's recognition of the kindness rendered to him by the woman of Shunem. It is true that she provided his chamber only with "a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick;" yet when a prophet's eye alights on the gifts of sympathy, a prophet's tongue warms into the eloquence of gratitude,—“Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee?” The minister of God did not take the gifts of the people as though he had a right to them, but with fullest appreciation magnified the simplest service of hospitality into "all this care." The offering of a flower on the part of a homeless child might strike

a monarch into tears. Generosity must answer generosity. You may have been in the grove at the golden time of dawn. You have heard the first note from some wakeful bird ; how soon it was answered by another ! Note answered note, trill replied to trill, until the whole place became a temple of song, and the light and the music made the new-born morning happy. So shall it be in the great moral dawn of generous manhood. Kindness shall answer kindness, man's love shall reply to God's love ; every man shall give as a reason for his song, "I love Him because He first loved me ;" and this sacrifice of loving, adoring gratitude shall ascend to the smiling heavens, and earth itself shall become the little "chamber" in which the God of the prophets shall abide.

3. "All the disciples forsook Him and fled." Mention the great names which any man casts out, or the great labourers whom he leaves to toil alone, and you instantly reveal the history of his soul. A sneer may be a summary of education. A smile may be a condensed biography. A man gives a daily revelation of himself in his pictures, his guests, his books. Let a man speak contemptuously of Milton, and he thereby declares himself a fool ; let a general sneer at Cæsar, and he need not otherwise proclaim himself a disappointed fox ; let a man flee from Christ, and he will vividly demonstrate the

depth and violence of his unconfessed depravity. But men shall not always flee from Christ. The nations shall all be His. Solitude shall pass into fellowship, fellowship shall deepen into brotherhood, brotherhood is the blossom of heaven !

4. "Some doubted." There is a kind of doubting which would appear to arise from a peculiarity of organization. There are minds which turn circumstances into questions, facts into problems. Such minds think that the highest words in human speech are "logic," "evidence," "demonstration." Everything that they receive as true must come in a certain set of waggon, along a certain set of lines, through a certain set of tunnels, accompanied by a certain set of officials. I believe that honest doubt or hesitation as to the meaning of some things in Revelation is perfectly compatible with sonship. At the same time, there is a kind of doubt of which we should all beware. It is an ignorant, undevout, unresting, pertinacious, cantankerous suspicion ; a suspicion that will drink no water that has not been drawn by its own leaky buckets ; a suspicion that will not admit the sunlight until the sun has given a full and satisfactory account of the spots upon his face ; a suspicion that is continually arranging the mental faculties into sub-committees to take into consideration the general government of God ; a suspicion, in short, that can exist only in foetid

hearts and insane heads. Childlike doubt, reverential hesitation, is to be treated with great delicacy. A coarse denunciation of such doubt has done incalculable injury to the church. Many a strong-winged, royal-hearted, daring genius has been imprisoned by our theological constables, and led up to the ecclesiastical scaffold by the hollow-hearted chaplains of a technical and stony orthodoxy. Many a broken heart marks the track of such champions of orthodoxy. They think that the rod of persecution is a rod cut out of the tree of life. Christ was ever gentle to those whose hesitancy was conscientious and reverential. He had a "Woe" for the pompous Pharisee, but a "Reach hither thy finger" for the honest doubter.

5. Mysteries. What are they but as the earth at night-time, speeding on with swift wing to the all-revealing brightness of morning?

6. "What ye know not now ye shall know *hereafter*." "*Hereafter* ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." "*Hereafter* ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power." What mysteries are in the "*hereafters*" of a great life! It is but a fractional life that has no "*hereafter*" to sing to it in sorrow, that can see nothing but the calamity that immediately impends. Jesus

hath brought a good "hereafter" to the godly man ; a "hereafter" of knowledge, of angelic manifestation, of fellowship with infinite power. It is a test of wisdom to be able to look one's "hereafter" lovingly and smilingly in the face.

7. You sometimes fear lest, after all, you are not Christ's freemen. You talk of doubts and misgivings, of sudden checks and startling gloom falling on you at noontide. The vicissitudes of your experience occasion much perplexity, under the pressure of which you wonderingly exclaim, "Am I free indeed?" I have a word for you, a word of interpretation and cheer. Yes, you are free ; but you are still in the land of your old bondage. The *memorials* of your enthrallment are still round about you. It is with you as with a slave manumitted from physical bondage, but who yet remains in the country where everything reminds him of his former condition ; still he sees the slave-masters ; still he hears the swinging thong that is answered by human blood ; still he hears the dolorous wail of wronged humanity, the clang of imprisoning chains, and the piercing voice of a tyranny that fattens itself on blasted manhood ; and as he sees and hears all this, associated as it is with bitterest personal memories, ever and anon he shudders as if under the old grip, and asks, "Am I really free?" It is much the same with men who have been delivered

from spiritual bondage. They are yet in the sphere of satanic agency. The old poisonous currents assail them, old voices of temptation try upon them the effect of the soft whisper, and thus they feel that still their feet wander in a weary way. Home by-and-bye ! In the home-sphere there are no dark memories, but a continuity of "newness of life."

8. "He hath done all things well," not *best*. "Best" is one of our superlatives, by which we endeavour to express our ultimate conceptions of excellence ; but as applied to God, the word "well" is more expressive than the word "best : " there is a dignity in "well" that is not to be found in its superlative. To *God's* "well" there is no "better."

9. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Gen. ii. 17). So long as there is a Sovereign in the universe, we must have regulations. Abolish restraining forces, and creation is plunged into endless anarchy. There must be a forbidden tree : that tree is the representative of the Infinite ; it is God's seal upon His own work. The finite must have a boundary somewhere ; and there is no arrangement so fitting, so benevolent, so sublime as that God himself should point out the forbidden tree and show man the limit of His empire. "Thou shalt not" is a necessary part of all legislation. God has often written

the words ; they are upon the shore of every sea, commanding the invading waves back to their appointed place ; they guard the lightning on its fiery way, and direct the sweep of the destroying angel ; they are the voice of God ; whoso neglects them must necessarily die. "Thou shalt not" is an unalterable condition of wise and happy existence. Take away the "Thou shalt not" from your codes of legislation, and a consuming fire will reduce the nations to ashes. Take away the "Thou shalt not" from your domestic economy—have no forbidden tree in the garden of your home—and soon your domestic sphere will be a wreck. One of a child's earliest lessons is "Thou shalt not ;" so Almighty God, in introducing a child to Eden, writes "Thou shalt not" around the root of the central tree. "Thou shalt not" is the guardian of order ; it is the entreaty of pleading virtue ; it marks off the dominion of rectitude from the wilderness of error ; it is the cry of the Infinite to the children of a day.

10. "For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Death of some kind must ever follow the violation of moral law. The death here threatened is both corporeal and spiritual. The moment Adam sinned, Death sailed, as it were, along the stream of his blood, sat down on his heart, and awaited the signal from heaven. That Adam did not immediately expire, and find a tomb within

the shadow of the forbidden tree, is no proof that he did not become subject to physical death. Death ascended the throne on the birthday of sin. The flowers then hung their heads; they could look up no longer with their accustomed beauty, when, by anticipation, they felt themselves planted on the tomb of man. We must feel that it was right for man's destiny to be suspended upon one act. You do not wait for a man to commit two thefts before you pronounce him a thief. It may require a lifetime to build a character, and but a moment to destroy one! So is it in *every* sense literally true —“There is but a step between thee and death.”

11. Without root-forces we shall die. In friendship, in business, in speech, in religion, there must ever be more than is *seen*. The mightiest agents are working in secret. God himself is the *Invisible*.

12. The sabbath is older than Sinai. It came not by legislation, but, as it were, by necessity. Afterwards the sabbath was guarded by sanctions; but it was a birth of love, defended by the hand of law. That the sabbath was once given to man, the most violent anti-sabbatarian cannot deny: I say, then, that unless you can show me a direct *repeal* of the gift, I shall cling to it as an invaluable blessing. I don't ask whether it was *twice* given, I ask



if it was once given, and being assured of *that*, I must have the most distinct decree of revocation before me ere I can give up a day sacred to rest and worship. Why should man busy himself in refining and philosophizing the gift away? I pronounce it immoral to be so engaged; it is base suspicion; it is songless, parched, damnable ingratitude. I ask again, Has God *recalled* the gift? If you answer, No, I shall smite the hand of the plunderer who would filch from my heart one of the richest gifts of Heaven. But I am told the day has been changed. I am glad it has! Did you never think of the infinite beauty of the arrangement that the day of resurrection should just be the day after creation? Did not God's own hand put the days thus near each other? It was at the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, that the Saviour arose; hence the light of creation's sabbath merged into the brighter beams of Christ's resurrection-day. It was right to set apart a day on which to remember the lighting up of the sun, the piling of mountains, the covering of a naked world with a garment of many colours,—that was right; but the day *after* there was a deed done before which the creation of the universe sank into insignificance: the old creation-sabbath was no longer needed; on that sabbath the Creator himself slept the sleep of sacrificial death, and that one day obliterated the creation-sabbath; but next

morning He *arose*, and hence-on resurrection-day was the rest-day of God and the rest-day of man.

13. "And they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Thus sin multiplies man's necessities. Innocence needs no fig-leaves; it is its own best robe. Just, therefore, as man incurs guilt does he involve himself in many wants. Lead back your conventionalities, elegancies, and ingenious devices through their long pedigree, and you will eventually find yourselves side by side with the guilty pair under the shadow of the fig-tree. All attempts at moral culture are so many efforts to recover the robe lost in Adam's fall. And with what success have those efforts been attended? Alas! "fig-leaves" is the suggestive answer. We can never regain, by our own strength, the family robe; we wander in destitution and shame until the second Adam invests us with "fine linen" woven by His bleeding hands; and covered with *that* we are fit for the society of God!

14. Men readily blame circumstances for their guilt. Had they been surrounded by the right conditions, they fondly imagine that they would have maintained their purity. They forget that it is the glory of manhood to conquer circumstances. With all their vaunted power, they are continually re-echoing their father's mean declaration—"The

woman that Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

15. The theologues have fought many a sturdy battle about "the final perseverance of the saints;" or, rather, I should say they have fought many a sturdy battle about "the final perseverance of;" for in their debates the principal word, "saints," has often been entirely overlooked. They have fought about "final," and they have fought about "perseverance," and swung their gory battle-axes over each other's heads with most desperate vengeance, without looking at the clear depths and infinite heights of all that is involved in the word "saints." Put it thus, "The final perseverance of *professors*," and I reject the doctrine as a fiction; but put it, "The final perseverance of the *saints*," "the *children*," the "*heirs*," and I accept it as a glorious necessity, and mark it off as a never-failing fountain of consolation.

16. God has suffered Himself to be tested in innumerable ways by an unbelieving church. In this fact we have one of the most marvellous displays of His unbounded mercy. I know not that in all the history of apostasy there is a more sensuous and dishonouring test of divine goodness than was suggested by Israel in the wilderness, viz., "Can He provide *flesh* for His people?" In-

gratitude can never find a final test ; so soon as one test is answered, another is suggested ; and in this way ingratitude would for ever feast itself on the infamous amusement of fabricating puzzles for God. In this instance we have the human stomach made the arbiter of the human creed ! "flesh" made the basis of faith. You see what an evil heart will lead men to, to what petty trifling as well as deep degradation ; and you see, too, how little use there is in trying to silence objections by performing wonders of power ; when the heart has lost its divine tone, miracles cease to thrill by their morality, and come to please simply by their mystery. Beware, then, O man, lest by thy questionings thou fallest into the sin of mocking God : he who begins by quibbling about the creation of the universe, may end by having no temple but his own stomach !

17. Evil must have a "bottomless pit," for its tendency is ever downward. Man could not fall so low, were he not so great ; ay, it is the abused God in a man that turns him into a devil.

18. Destiny may be easily read if you begin at the right word. Deeds are destiny ; character is fate. If your works be right works (right evangelically), your destiny will be right. God will test every man's works by fire. If there be not

enough of God in a man's works, they will become a lake of fire, in which the worker shall burn for ever; but if they have God in them fully, they will become a chariot of fire, bearing the worker to the felicities of heaven.

19. All men cannot work in the same way. "There are diversities of operation." Upon the face of a watch you may see an illustration of my meaning. On that small space you have three workers: there is the second-pointer, performing rapid revolutions; there is the minute-pointer, going at a greatly reduced speed; and there is the hour-pointer, tardier still. Now any one unacquainted with the mechanism of a watch would conclude that the busy little second-pointer was doing all the work; it is clicking away at sixty times the speed of the minute-pointer: and as for the hour-hand, *that* seems to be doing no work at all. You can see in a moment that the first is busy, and in a short time you will see the second stir; but you must wait still longer to assure yourself of the motion of the third. So is it in the church. There are active, fussy men, who appear to be doing the work of the whole community, and others who are slower. But can we do without the minute and the hour pointers? The noisy second-hand might go round its little circle for ever, without telling the world the true time. We

should be thankful for all kinds of workers. The silent, steady hour-hand need not envy its noisy little colleague. Each man must fill the measure of his capacity. Your business is to do your allotted work so as to meet the approbation of the Master.

P R A Y E R S.

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ALMIGHTY GOD, we rejoice that Thou hast not covered Thyself with a cloud that our prayer should not pass through. Thou mightest have made the heavens as brass, so that our cry could not penetrate Thy dwelling-place, but in infinite love Thou dost continue to welcome suppliants to Thy throne. With eyes looking unto Jesus we venture to approach Thee. Our guilty hands grasp the cross whilst we pour out our wants in Thy hearing. Calvary is our altar; we stand there and plead with God. We bless Thee for Jesus. Help us to understand Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. We would dwell upon His beauty till we ourselves become beautiful; we would be transfigured into His likeness; we would be one with Jesus. This petition Thou wilt not deny, for Thou lovest Thine only-begotten Son. We rejoice that Jesus is the true Shepherd, and that we are enfolded among His sheep. We were as sheep going astray, but through infinite mercy we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel; lead us into green pastures, and deliver us out of all places where we are scattered in the

cloudy and dark day. Thou hast promised to feed Thy flock in a good pasture, and to place their fold upon the high mountains of Israel. We feel our security, for no man is able to pluck us out of Thy hand, and already we realize the coming joy; for when the chief Shepherd shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

Cleanse us from all iniquity. Keep us back from presumptuous sins. O that Thou wouldest bless us indeed, that Thine hand might be with us, that Thou wouldest keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us! Lift up Thy standard against the threatening flood, and save us when the waters overflow. Show Thy seal to our enemies, and may they who would hurt us fall back and be dismayed. May all evil be expelled from our nature by the precious blood of the blessed Saviour. Deepen our horror of sin; may we hate iniquity with perfect hatred, and repel the subtlest approaches of the enemy. Holy Spirit, dwell within, keeping our understanding from error, and saving our hearts from pollution. Our frailty Thou knowest; Lord, keep the city, lest the evil one should enter with armed forces. Blessed Jesus, Thou art the Conqueror; repeat Thy conquests in all our battles; make our hoofs as flint, and our wheels as the whirlwind, that the devil may flee before us.

Give us wisdom. Bless us with peace. Kindle within us all heavenly aspirations. Enable us to do



or to suffer Thy will, and may our purest joy be ever to glorify the Name which Thou hast exalted above every name in heaven and on earth. Light of all creation, shed Thy quickening rays upon us, and make us glad in the brightness of Thy smile. We ask all for the sake of Christ our Saviour and King. Amen.

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Almighty God, Thy people will be still praising Thee. Thy mercies are innumerable, and Thy goodness is past finding out. The light of the morning is the witness of Thy power, and the shades of eventide are the memorials of Thy faithfulness. Thou hast spread our table, and as for our cup, lo, it is flowing over. Thou hast given us the shield of Thy salvation, and Thy gentleness hath made us great. Thou art our strength and power; Thou makest our way perfect. Hear, then, the song of our gladness, and let the expression of our joy come up before Thee with favour. Our souls are laden with sacrifices of praise, and our lips cannot utter all our deepening love. Read our hearts; see what gratitude is there struggling for utterance, and mercifully deign to accept it all.

We mourn our sins. As a cage is full of birds, so have our hearts been full of deceit. Our iniquities have turned away Thy mercies, and our sins have withholden good things from us. But there is

mercy with God; the Holy One is full of love. Behold us, Lord, as we bend at Thy throne, and for the sake of the Lamb of God pardon the sins which we mourn. Lay not Thine hand upon the sword of vengeance, but wave over us the sceptre of mercy. Our eyes are directed to the Saviour's blood, for it cleanseth from all sin; and our impure hands cling to the Saviour's cross. Lord God, tenderer than a mother's love, we tarry here until the light of Thy forgiveness falls upon the tears of our penitence. Thou knowest the number of our sins, Lord,—how great! Our thoughts have been averted from Thee, our will has rebelled against Thy purposes, and our hearts have fled far into the wilderness. We have sinned in secret. Under the covert of the darkness have we defiled ourselves; and we have said, How doth God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High? We have not been valiant for the truth upon the earth. We have gone from evil to evil. We have supplanted our brothers, and walked with slanders. We have taught our tongue to speak lies, and wearied ourselves to commit iniquity. But Thy mercy is not clean gone for ever. Thou wilt even yet lead us into the wilderness and speak comfortably to us. O gentle Saviour, pity us, and lay upon our guilty hearts Thy pierced hand.

Bless Thy people, O Shepherd of Israel. Pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. Pour Thy Spirit upon Thy people, and

Thy blessing upon their offspring. In all their temptations renew their strength. Disarm the power of the tempter. Make the wilderness blossom as the rose. Root us in the love of Jesus. May we grow so like our Saviour, that the world may own the mystery and power of our godly life. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us. Increase our wisdom. Strengthen us with might in the inner man. Let not evil have dominion over us. Deliver us from all our enemies, frustrate the tokens of liars, and make diviners mad, and glorify Thyself in our deliverance. Great God, be Thou our rock, our shield, our song.

We fall into Thy hands, and there would we rest for evermore. To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whom we worship as one God, be praise immortal.

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Most merciful God, we bow before Thee that we may make confession of our sins. We have perverted our way, and forgotten the Lord our God. As a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have we dealt treacherously with Thee. Yet in Thy boundless mercy Thou dost say, Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Our sins lie heavily on our hearts, and make us sore afraid. They have enkindled Thine anger against us, and greatly grieved Thy Holy Spirit. We lie down in our shame, and our con-

fusion covereth us ; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. We remember with bitterness of heart our great impenitence. We have not responded to Thy corrections, and to the voice of Thy love we have too often been deaf. Thou hast stricken us, but we have not grieved ; Thou hast consumed us, but we have refused to receive correction : we have made our faces harder than a rock. Blessed Lord, be pleased, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, to forgive these our sins. We have no hope but in Him. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. We look unto the bleeding Saviour, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world to taste death for every man. We plead no merit of our own ; we trust in Jesus, and flee to Thy precious and abounding grace.

Let it please Thee, most merciful Father, to be with us throughout all the engagements of this day. Put thy Holy Spirit within us. Watch over our hearts. Keep the door of our lips. Make us fruitful in holy works. Mercifully preserve us from all danger, and graciously prosper the labour of our hands. O Lord, hear us. Pity our weakness. Scourge us not in Thy great anger, but come to us in Thine overflowing love. And now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and

bath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

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Most merciful God, Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice. Thou hast preserved us in the hours of darkness and helplessness; and as Thou dost give Thy beloved sleep, so dost Thou touch their eyelids and bid them rejoice in the returning light. We thank Thee for Thy protecting care, and implore Thee to remain round about us during all the day. Cover us with Thy feathers, and under Thy wing may we trust. As Thou hast delivered us from the terror by night, so do Thou defend us from the arrow that flieth by day. Give Thine angels charge concerning us, and be Thyself our refuge and fortress. Bestow upon us, in rich abundance, Thy Holy Spirit, and make us fruitful in all good works. Prosper the work of our hands, for Thou only canst establish us for ever. Put Thy fear in our hearts, and help us to walk in Thy statutes. Watch over us, lest we turn from the ways of righteousness, and bring dishonour on the Saviour's name. Strengthen us in all holy resolutions, all good desires, all generous and noble sentiments. We ask these mercies in the name of our divine and only Saviour, to whom be the praise of all hearts for ever. Amen.

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Blessed Saviour, our hearts faint for Thee ; come to us, dwell in us, make us like Thyself. Behold our corruption, and by the efficacy of Thy precious blood destroy it with eternal destruction. Lamb of God, forsake us not ; every day come to us, and Thy coming shall be as the dawning to the poor restless one who has been longing for the light. O Saviour ! we love Thee, though we cannot tell all our love ; and though we often sin, we still feel how dear Thou art to our memories and our hopes. Pity us when we are driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; we would bear Thy shield and wield Thy sword, for no enemy hath power against them. Lord Jesus, give us Thy shield and sword. Teach us the mystery of life ; and teach us to lean on Thee while that mystery brightens into revelation. Pity our littleness and frailty, and from Thy holy hill send us enduring help. Look upon our sorrows ; their number and their bitterness Thou knowest, and Thou hast the oil of healing and consolation. Thou hast taught us the value of sorrow, and we bless Thee for the teaching. Thine own hands are wounded, and Thine own side is pierced ; so art Thou able to succour those whose hearts are heavy with much grief. We will come to Jesus ; we tarry till His smile falls upon our sadness ; we will not go without some token of Thy love. If we perish, it shall be where no man ever fell, before Thy presence, with prayer trembling

on our lips. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen. Lord Jesus, come quickly.

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ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast wounded our hearts as if Thou wert angry with us. Thou hast taken from our midst a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and we now feel desolate and sad. Why dost Thou hush the music which gladdens us all day long? Why dost Thou darken our homes, and bend us down into dust and ashes, and cover us with garments of mourning? Doth the LORD take delight in impoverishing His people, and drawing out their soul unto death? Our hearts mourn with bitterness their irreparable losses, and yet would struggle against every temptation to rebel. Teach us that our dear one is with Jesus, and that he still beams upon us, though hidden from our poor vision. Pour the healing oil into the wound THOU hast inflicted, and fill the tears of sorrow with light that shall make them beautiful as morning dew. Remind the bereaved of the exceeding precious promises recorded for their special benefit, and turn their mourning into joy. Assure them that they, too, will be called to the heavenly rest, and be for ever with the Lord. Show them that time is but a moment, that grief is a flying shadow, and that loss is gain. Quickly come for us, or if we tarry long, let Thy grace

abide with us through the weary night, until the horizon smiles upon us with the light that shall shine for ever. SAVIOUR, heal us, and bear for us this mighty woe. It crushes down our poor strength, but THY pierced hand is omnipotent.

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BLESSED SAVIOUR, we pray for those who never pray for themselves. We have delivered Thy thunders in their hearing, and we have whispered to them the sweet tidings of THINE infinite love. We know not what more we can do. They have seen our tears, they have heard our entreaties, yet is their heart locked up. SAVIOUR, we return to THEE. Smite them not with THINE iron rod, but spare them until another offer of THY mercy has been made; and do THOU come in all the omnipotence of THY tenderness, and turn them from the ways of destruction. They have often clenched their hand in THY face, their ingratitude would have lost them a thousand human friends, but THY mercy passeth all comprehension.

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GREAT FATHER of all mankind, hear the new song which has been put into the mouth of those who now in a new name approach Thee. THOU hast given them life out of themselves, and as father and mother they now kneel at THY footstool.



Through this medium of parentage, reveal to them more and more the mystery of Thine own FATHERHOOD; and enable them so to magnify their own tenderness and compassion, as to get brighter visions of THINE own infinite love. They have known THEE as King, may they now know THEE as FATHER; and as obedient children may they serve THEE every day. Spare their offspring: may the child live before THEE, and be enriched with heavenly wisdom. Early may his feet be turned into the way of righteousness, and his name be recorded among THY saints. Disappoint the devils who will seek to ensnare him, and fold him closely to THINE own heart. Upon all families let Thy paternal blessing descend, and in all homes establish Thy gracious name.

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ALMIGHTY GOD, we would be holy as Thou art holy. Do Thou, by the effectual working of Thy Holy Spirit, so regenerate and sanctify us that we may walk in newness of life, being made dead unto sin, but alive unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We would be planted in the likeness of Christ's death, that we may also be in the likeness of His resurrection. Thou knowest our infirmities; and Thou knowest the force and range of our evil passions. Sin has reigned in our mortal body, and we have obeyed it in the lusts thereof.

We tremble at our own condition ; we shudder as we contemplate our moral ghastliness ; but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, and herein do we hope for evermore. Create within us a clean heart, and renew within us a right spirit. Watch our enemy, and overthrow him. Keep us close to Thy side, where no evil can befall us. Guard our way, and break Thou the teeth of the devouring lion. Oh, how helpless we are ! Our arm is without power, and in our right hand there is no victory. Break us not, for we are bruised reeds : have mercy upon us, for we are dust. O that we might feel our Saviour's tears falling upon us in pity, and feel the power of His blood in our guilty hearts ! then we should hope as those who see the light of morning, and our souls should be refreshed with exceeding comfort. Saviour, stretch out Thine hands towards us, and we shall walk safely on the deep. When we tremble, strengthen us ; and when we fear, give us hope. We ask it in Thine own name, for we have no other trust.

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